The Jew in Post-Stalin Soviet Literature

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INTRODUCTION

SOMEWHERE between literature, history and sociology lies a no-man's land which prudent scholars usually try to avoid. The area is not particularly inviting. Its exploration usually requires an examination of literature outside of customary esthetic criteria, while the sociological and historical evidence it yields does not usually meet rigorous standards of the social sciences. The scholar thus risks condescending disapproval from those of his colleagues whose research is limited to problems comfortably fashionable and responsive to unchallenged methods of investigation. Such purists bear some resemblance to physicians willing to treat only "easy" cases. It is our contention that when more direct methods of investigation are beyond reach we can ill afford to disdain whatever imperfect tools remain at our disposal and simply dismiss a problem as unworthy of serious attention. We submit that to do so may serve the interests of the scholar, but not of scholarship.

Only fifteen years ago content analyses of Soviet fiction, poetry and drama were used for the purpose of probing a wide range of problems of Soviet life. After Stalin's death in 1953, a partial lifting of the hitherto unpenetrable Soviet borders brought hundreds of Western students and scholars to the U.S.S.R. Today, one need no longer rely exclusively on literature for evidence on many aspects of the Soviet social system. These can now be studied, at least to a significant extent, on the basis of published

statistical materials, documents found in archives and even, on rare occasions, through firsthand observation. The fact that a study of the public image of the Jew in the U.S.S.R. must resort to indirect methods of content analysis of literary works is illustrative of the secrecy which surrounds the problem of the Jew in Soviet society. Soviet spokesmen never tire of repeating that there is no anti-Semitism in the U.S.S.R., no discrimination and no bias. Yet no field work has ever been undertaken to ascertain this "fact": none is allowed by foreigners, and none is carried out by Soviet researchers. And since growing concern for the fate of Soviet Jewry, now the world's second largest Jewish community, understandably calls for a thorough investigation of all the dimensions of the problem, the present study was launched in full awareness of its pitfalls and limitations. Indeed, it may be said that if and when the Soviet authorities relax their ban on the study of their country's Jewish community, of assimilation, prejudice, and group survival by such conventional tools as statistics and questionnaires, this will in itself constitute a major reversal of their present policy of strangulation of their Jewish citizenry as an ethnic and cultural entity.

The aim of the present study is to examine the image of the Jew that emerges from Soviet Slavic literatures in the decade and a half since Stalin's death.

It is common knowledge that in Soviet literature the period since 1953 had its "thaws" and "freezes," and these had a strong impact on the portrayal of the Jew. Not unexpectedly, it has been more favorable during the "thaws" and attracted comparatively many writers, while the "freezes" have had the opposite effect. Nevertheless, this discussion deals with the period as a whole, because its division into sub-periods would result in much overlapping and in an excessive fragmentation of evidence. Furthermore, fluctuations in the Soviet Union's treatment of the Jews during the fifteen years that concern us here have been rather moderate and involved no sharp reversals. Finally, unlike in previous years, the practice of ruthless destruction of some literary materials that no longer reflect current policies and the thorough rewriting of those that can still be salvaged has abated somewhat in recent years, with the result that works published, e.g., in 1956, may still be found a decade later in Soviet libraries and thus continue to exert some influence on their readers.

The image of the Jew in the mind of a Soviet citizen is affected by a wide variety of sources, ranging from personal observation and hearsay to official newspaper editorials and formal school curricula. There are many indications, however, that Soviet citizens tend to attach more credence to literary sources than is commonly expected and, more importantly, that literature is

very often accepted as a valid model for the reader's personal behavior and attitudes. This fact is borne out by numerous monographs published in the U.S.S.R. itself. Moreover, this writer's own work with the hundreds of questionnaires circulated nearly twenty years ago among Soviet displaced persons in Europe by Harvard University's Russian Research Center demonstrated time and again that novels, drama and poetry were thought to contain "true" portrayals of life (a demand that was made of literature in Russia ever since early in the nineteenth century), and that this faith was reinforced by the belief that Soviet literature is subject to less rigid pressures from the censorship than the theater and the cinema, not to speak of ordinary journalism. Western students of Soviet literature tend to agree that there is much truth in this belief, and European and American observers of the Soviet scene, whose interests range from economics and jurisprudence to straight news reporting, have long ago learned to follow carefully Soviet literary periodicals. Many a Western newsman stationed in Moscow learned from personal experience how indispensable in his work are Soviet novels, poetry and drama.

The literary sources available to the Soviet citizens span a wide range of works that are either thought desirable or at least unobjectionable by the Soviet authorities. Quite aside from the fact that a study of all of these would be prohibitive by its scope alone, there were several factors that argued in favor of limiting the investigation to recent Soviet writing. Of the image of the Jew in prerevolutionary Russian literature and in Soviet writing prior to Stalin's death, there are earlier studies of which interested readers may wish to avail themselves.[1] And while there are, regrettably, no comparable investigations dealing with West European and American literature available in Russian translations,[2] it is likely that the impact of non-Soviet books is limited because of the possible failure of Soviet readers to identify foreign Jewish protagonists and problems with Soviet Jews. (It is worth noting in this connection that the Soviet populace, as well as the authorities, appear to make a clear distinction even between the Ashkenazi Jews of European Russia and the Jews of Georgia, Bukhara and the Caucasus. The latter, a much less numerous

[1] For information on the tsarist era see Joshua Kunitz, *Russian Literature and the Jew*, New York, Columbia University Press, 1929. For the Soviet period see Bernard J. Choseed, "Jews in Soviet Literature," *Through the Glass of Soviet Literature: Views of Russian Society*, edited, with an introduction, by Ernest J. Simmons, New York, Columbia University Press, 1953. Also Maurice Friedberg, "Jewish Themes in Soviet Literature," *The Jews in Soviet Russia*, Lionel Kochan, editor, New York, Oxford University Press, 1970.

[2] It is worth noting, however, that in recent years translated foreign literature, much of it written by liberal anti-Fascist authors, contained by far the most sympathetic treatments of Jewish themes found in *any* literary works accessible to Soviet readers.

group, were relatively unaffected by the anti-Semitic purges during the late 1940's and early 1950's.) We have also decided to discuss only the three Slavic Soviet literatures, the Russian, the Ukrainian and the Belorussian, since those are not only the most important, with the Russian not unexpectedly the dominant, but also because the overwhelming majority of Soviet Jews live in the areas where these languages are spoken.

Nevertheless, perhaps a very brief summary of earlier developments may be found useful by some readers of this study.

An Eastern Orthodox country, Russia never produced a culture permeated with an admiration of the Old Testament. An almost total reliance on late Byzantine Christianity precluded the creation of idealized Biblical imagery that had served as a counterbalance of sorts to the anti-Semitic elements in the cultures of Protestant and, to a lesser extent, Roman Catholic nations. Hence, there has been nothing in Russia remotely resembling Walter Scott's majestic unreal Jews and their mysteriously alluring daughters, or Lessing's Nathan the Wise in Germany, or even the idealized Polish Jewish innkeeper of Adam Mickiewicz, the national poet of a neighboring Slavic Catholic land. Indeed the Jewish innkeepers (then a classic "Jewish" occupation in Eastern Europe) are depicted either with the haughty disdain of a *grand seigneur,* as in the case in Pushkin or Lermontov, or with a nasty plebeian hatred in such writers as Gogol. All three Russian writers, incidentally, were contemporaries of the Pole Mickiewicz – one was even a personal friend – and curiously, all three considered themselves admirers of Sir Walter Scott. The anti-Semitic tradition in Russian literature was continued in much the same fashion after Romanticism gave way to Realism. Again, there were at least two distinct strains: the mild, secular and aristocratic, as represented by Turgenev; and the shrill and fanatically religious of Dostoyevsky.

It was only late in the nineteenth century that a change began to take place. While most Russian writers retained the traditionally unfriendly attitude toward the Jew, exceptions became gradually more numerous and more important. In many cases a Russian writer's *portrayal* of the Jews was far from identical with his *attitudes* toward them. This ambiguity is to be found in the writings of Tolstoy, a man often torn by contradictions between his beliefs and his instincts, and, even more strikingly, in Nikolai Leskov, whose grotesque tales frequently embody what are perhaps unconsciously vicious caricatures of Jews, but who, on the other hand, was the author of *The Jews in Russia,* probably the most impassioned and best informed tract in defense of the

Jews to emerge from nineteenth century Russia. At the same time, some Russian writers became consistent champions of tsarist Russia's oppressed Jews, and combatted anti-Semitism both in their art and in their journalistic writings. This group raised its voice in indignation and horror after a wave of pogroms swept Russia at the turn of the century. Its members included Korolenko, Kuprin, Andreyev, Chekhov and Gorky.

Early Soviet literature's attitude toward the Jew was almost uniformly positive, if only because from its inception Soviet writing pursued openly didactic goals, and a campaign aimed at the uprooting of anti-Semitism ranked high among the Soviet government's priorities. Judaism as a religion, Jewish nationalism, the Hebrew language and culture, and most Jewish customs and folkways came to be regarded as reactionary and inimical to the Soviet regime soon after the establishment of Soviet rule. Jews as individuals, however, could be portrayed sympathetically, since most of them were, if not proletarians in the strict sense, then at least paupers who had few fond memories of the *ancien régime*. Furthermore, even those who found the Communist creed distasteful for ideological or economic reasons were by and large neutralized by memories of open anti-Semitism under the tsars, and very few made common cause with those who opposed the Soviet republic in an armed struggle. And since early Soviet writers paid almost no attention to the Bolsheviks' liberal and Socialist adversaries (among whom the Jews were highly prominent as well as numerous), choosing their villains from among the various armed forces that tried to suppress the Communist state, there were very few hostile figures among the Jews found in the pages of Soviet novels, poetry and drama of the 1920's. The rich Jew in Yurii Libedinsky's *A Week* is among these exceptions: he is ready to endure humiliation under an anti-Semitic regime, provided he is allowed to keep his money.

By and large, however, the Jew that emerges from early Soviet literature is either a frightened, passive but sympathetic bystander—usually elderly—or an active fighter for the Communist cause. The latter category includes some of the most memorable characters in Soviet writing, such as the downtrodden tailor subsequently transformed into a Bolshevik Commissar in Iosif Utkin's long poem *Tale of Motele the Redhead,* the martyred Commissar Kogan in Eduard Bagritsky's ballad *The Lay About Opanas,* and the fearless guerrilla leader Levinson in Alexander Fadeyev's *The Rout.* None of these heroic figures was particularly Jewish in his cultural or other ethnic allegiances, although Utkin's Motele spoke Yiddish and at one time was a practicing religious Jew. Needless to say, this oversimplification, whether intentional or not, detracted not only from their artistic convinc-

ingness, but also from their documentary value. As we shall see later in this study, this trait was to dominate Soviet literature's treatment of the subject in decades to follow. Full-bodied Jewish characters, whose conversion to the Communist cause was slow and labored and full of misgivings over its compatibility with accustomed Jewish values and traditions ("To the Revolution we say 'yes,' but can we say 'no' to the Sabbath?"), appear only in the works of Isaac Babel. Regularly denounced now for nearly a half a century for his hyperboles and love for the exotic, the Romantic Babel succeeded in presenting a gallery of Jewish types that is more convincing and of greater sociological and historical authenticity than the primitive creations of his allegedly "realistic" contemporaries. There is a ring of truth in his Jewish Bolshevik who is on occasion drawn to the warm memories of his Orthodox Jewish childhood, in his rabbi's son who dreams of reconciling Lenin and Maimonides, and in his own Jew who dreams of an "International of good men." It is for this reason that Babel's plea for understanding and compassion does not sound hollow – just as Babel's Gentile Red Army men, with all their cruelty, lust and greed, evoke more sympathy and understanding even in non-Soviet readers than any of the primitive heroes of Soviet fiction dealing with the Civil War.

Jewish villains reappeared in Soviet literature after the introduction, in 1922, of the New Economic Policy which to many declassé Jewish shopkeepers meant simply that they were now free to resume their traditional occupations. What most of them appear not to have understood is that their "capitalist" activity was tolerated only temporarily because of dire economic necessity; ideologically, they were enemies and would be treated as such as soon as they could be dispensed with.(In this respect, the Jewish bourgeoisie was the opposite number of Christian peasantry which was encouraged to increase production, only to be decimated later as *kulak* exploiters.) None of the literary works depicting greedy and depraved Jewish *entrepreneurs* achieved the lasting fame of the novels dealing with the Civil War, but then none of the NEP novels did. They were suppressed in years to come, chiefly because their Communist ideological message was less alluring than the scenes of "bourgeois decadence" which stood in stark contrast with drab proletarian virtue.

The early 1930's were marked by the appearance of a flood of "production" or "industrial" novels and of their rural counterparts, those that dealt with the forcible collectivization of agriculture. There were Jewish positive heroes in both types of writing – most notable among them engineer Margulies in Valentin Katayev's *Time, Forward!* and Davydov, the Party activist sent to organize a collective farm in Mikhail Sholokhov's *Virgin Soil*

Upturned—but, continuing the practices already in evidence in Soviet literature of earlier periods, they were Jews in origin only, and could be recognized as such by their Jewish-sounding names alone, or by an occasional discreet reference to their parents' "Jewish" occupation or address. Again, there was no hint that these protagonists may have had any specifically Jewish dilemmas and aspirations. In the official view of the Soviet authorities, which was by now enforced on Soviet writers as well, the Jewish "problem" had been fully solved as of November 7, 1917.

With but a very few exceptions, this grotesquely rigid adherence to an ideologically motivated policy was not abandoned even during World War II, when Nazi occupation of major parts of European Russia demonstrated to all that the Jews of the entire world, Communist and capitalist alike, did share in a destiny that was theirs alone, and that no other Soviet citizens were slaughtered *en masse* solely because of their ethnic origin. In Soviet literature published during the war years the Jews fought and died because they were Soviet citizens and Communists, and for no other reason. That this was merely another manifestation of the Soviet censorship at work was clearly demonstrated during the post-Stalin "thaw" when scores of works showed, if only fleetingly—for this was the extent to which the old rule of complete silence on the subject was relaxed—that Jewish martyrdom under Nazi rule was not quite the same as the plight of other mistreated non-Germans. In the meantime, the period of false optimism and callous indifference to human suffering that generally characterized Soviet literature of the eight years between the end of World War II and Stalin's death extended even more rigidly to that literature's portrayal of Jewish survivors of the Holocaust. Yes, the story went, citizens of the Jewish nationality had suffered in common with all citizens of the multinational Soviet state. Yes, just like other Soviet men and women —no more and no less—they were victims of Nazism, and like the others are now returning to normalcy. Industrious Communist engineers with Jewish names began to reappear in Soviet novels, such as Vasilii Azhayev's *Far from Moscow,* and they showed no deeper scars of the war than their non-Jewish neighbors. In Soviet literature of 1946-53 Russia's Jews are part of Russia—and a very inconspicuous one at that—but (with the exception of but a few works, mostly in Yiddish) not really part of the martyred Jewry of Europe. In 1948, when those of the world's Jews who had survived Hitler were shaken by the most momentous event in Jewish history of the last two thousand years, the renewed independence of a Jewish State, no notice whatever was taken of the fact in Soviet Russian literature.

But the year 1948 had a different meaning to Jews in Russian

literature. This was the year which saw the massacre of whatever Soviet Yiddish culture remained after the war – the closure of the last school, newspaper and theater, accompanied by arrests and then executions of scores of Yiddish cultural figures. Assimilated Jews active in Russian and other non-Yiddish cultures were ferreted out with a thoroughness that had been surpassed only recently by the Nazis. The word "Jew" was never used, but "cosmopolitan" was a serviceable enough synonym for men who "had no fatherland," who were "servile toward the bourgeois West," and to whom "pride in Russia" was alien. These writers and critics and actors were publicly disgraced; their Slavic *noms de plume* were torn off, and their shameful Semitic names exposed; thousands were arrested and many more dismissed from their jobs. Nevertheless, since the anti-Semitism was never officially admitted and there were some Jews who were *not* purged, and some who had even been among the accusers and the henchmen, those observers in the West who sounded alarm over the danger to Soviet Jewry were often met with the incredulity and charges of exaggeration that are not unlike those occasionally encountered at present in similar circumstances. While Stalin's regimented literature sang paeans to Communist "friendship of the Peoples," one of the most gruesome anti-Semitic campaigns was in full swing. With macabre irony, as Ehrenburg recalls in his memoirs, in the last year of the dictator's life Soviet theaters performed plays featuring contented citizens of Jewish ancestry. The same year saw the execution of a large group of Yiddish writers and poets, and the arrest of a group of Jewish physicians charged with attempted medical murder of a number of Soviet leaders in a conspiracy involving Jewish philanthropic agencies in the West.

We wish to emphasize here that while the degree of freedom allowed the Soviet writer during the post-Stalin years is, beyond dispute, significantly wider than that during the preceding period, within those wider limits Soviet literature is still rigidly controlled and every book published in the U.S.S.R. must still, as attested on its cover, receive clearance from the censors. One must not, therefore, look at even post-Stalin Soviet literature as a reliable reflection of social reality even to the extent that any literature may so be regarded. Soviet literature is not an accurate document of Soviet Jewish life. Rather, it offers isolated glimpses of that life, hints and comments and innuendos that are useful and interesting. It is not, however, a faithful let alone a comprehensive social document. Of one very important factor, however, that literature is a true indicator: of the image of the Soviet Jew that is being conveyed to Russia's general population by the country's writers, with either the approval or, at the very least, the acquiescence of the authorities. The portrayal of the Soviet Jew in litera-

ture may therefore be significant in the formation of public, as distinct from official, attitudes toward the Jew. And in a country where there is often a wide chasm between the official and the actual, the shaping of such attitudes may be of crucial import to its Jewish community.

We shall be concerned here with new Russian, Ukrainian and Belorussian prose, drama, verse, literary criticism and even memoirs published for the first time in the U.S.S.R. between 1954 and 1967, i.e., since Stalin's death and until the Six Day War. Literary evidence for the post-1967 period is still, understandably, fragmentary. Also, the possible impact of literature is presently much overshadowed by hysterical Soviet vilification of the State of Israel. Therefore, the middle of 1967 suggested itself as a logical cut-off point in our discussion. Material will be treated in four sections, corresponding to the main historical periods in which the works are set, namely the prerevolutionary, the early Soviet (from the Revolution of 1917 to the Nazi invasion of Russia in 1941), the wartime years, and the postwar period.

I. THE JEW IN TSARIST RUSSIA

ACCORDING TO Mikhail Pokrovsky, the famous Soviet historian of the Marxist, pre-nationalist 1920's, history is but current politics projected into the past. Pokrovsky has long since been disgraced, but in the U.S.S.R. his dictum is still very much in evidence not only in historical writing as such, but also in imaginative literature set in the past, recent and distant alike. Thus, Soviet historical prose, drama and verse reflect present-day attitudes toward a wide variety of problems. Paradoxically, fiction is relatively more straightforward than historical accounts, more sophisticated and in the final analysis more reliable as an indicator of the direction (and firmness) of Soviet policy and its less than official innuendos. Thus, some three decades ago, while Stalin was being glorified in thousands of literary works, Aleksei Tolstoy, one of the most refined and, politically, most cynical Soviet novelists, published his *Peter the Great.* A little later, Ivan the Terrible came into similar vogue, and Sergei Eisenstein made his famous film about the dreaded tsar. Among the Soviet intelligentsia, it was clear to one and all that the extolling of both historical figures was intended to evoke "spontaneous" and unacknowledged parallels with Stalin. It was not meant to impress the less skeptical Soviet citizens who by and large accepted the official image of a kindly, fatherly Stalin, the infallible leader of genius. It was for those Soviet men and women who perhaps

wished to believe in his divinity, but whose critical faculties prevented them from worshipping him with a blind, simplistic, unquestioning faith. The parallel with Peter the Great and Ivan the Terrible was promoted for those among the faithful (or for those whose faith needed strengthening) who retained an anthropomorphic and hence more realistic image of the Great Leader. These people were told, in effect, that, like Peter the Great, Stalin may be a capricious monarch, occasionally even less than gentle and not always just, and that some of the trappings of his reign may, with good reason, be found objectionable; but that in a historical context all these minor blemishes and shortcomings pale into insignificance, because they may well be now – as they have been in the past – necessary in the great task of reshaping a backward Russia into a European power. Even more concessions to facts were made in the suggested parallel with Ivan the Terrible: like the monstrous tsar, Stalin may be unspeakably cruel and even guilty of murder of thousands of friends and foes. Yet, in retrospect, these very real crimes will be forgiven by future historians, who will appreciate the fact that "objectively" Ivan was a "progressive" ruler, and that even the blood of the innocent served to cement the mighty edifice of a Russian state enlarged and fortified by Ivan.

It is, of course, true that both Peter the Great and Ivan the Terrible were meant to be *apologies* for Stalin. And yet, by employing parallels with men and events of a distant past, a Soviet writer and a cinema director conceded that Stalin was also crude, arbitrary, and cruel, thus creating a more accurate portrait of the dictator than could then conceivably be found in any other book or film dealing with Stalin directly.

Resorting to historical or foreign settings for the purpose of commenting about the present is, of course, not a new device in Russian literature, nor can Russian writing claim to have invented it. Yet it is probably true that nowhere in nineteenth century Europe was the tradition so strong as in Russia, if only because in no other country was freedom of the press so circumscribed and literary censorship so severe. As a consequence, when the Romantic poet Lermontov wished to register his impassioned protest against political oppression in his own days, he did so by singing the glories of the medieval Russian merchant republic of Novgorod, which was annexed by despotic Muscovy, or by attacking despotic Turkey; and when Russia's greatest satirist Saltykov-Shchedrin denounced the cruelty, corruption and sheer stupidity of the authorities of his own day, he did so by writing what purported to be a chronicle of a fictitious Russian town set in the distant past.

The degree of latitude gained by a Soviet writer by resorting

to historical (or foreign) imagery is, needless to say, narrowly circumscribed. Nevertheless, it is not to be disregarded by an author (or by an editor) who, by availing himself of it (or by republishing an old literary work), may wish to comment about the situation of Soviet Russian Jews at the present time, even if the comment *per se* seems innocuous enough. Thus, a writer who wants to condemn anti-Semitic discrimination in the U.S.S.R. is well advised to do so by condemning *tsarist* anti-Semitism, because, *officially,* anti-Semitism does not exist nor could possibly exist in the U.S.S.R., and even to condemn it would therefore be considered slanderous. Similarly, an author who may wish to describe some old Jewish customs that may very well survive even in Soviet conditions (e.g., religious services), or Jewish folkways that may still be preserved among some Soviet Jews, will find his task both simpler and safer if his account is presented in a prerevolutionary setting, that is, in a period when, even according to official Soviet historiography, there existed anti-Semitism, as well as Judaism as a living faith, Yiddish as a spoken language, Jewish traditions and even specifically Jewish hopes and aspirations.

A combination of all of these was shown, fittingly enough, surrounded by an aura of a fairy tale. Thus, the now defunct Stalinist weekly *Literaturnaya Rossiya* featured twice in 1966 (No. 1 and 35) tales of the Wise Men of Chelm, the legendary Jewish town of fools. Some of these, as retold by one A. Zil'berman, appear real enough, although at least one looks suspiciously like a forgery: it deals with "American justice" which, the story goes, may be purchased for dollars and which smells of rotten fish. The never-never land of the Yiddish fairy tale was also depicted in a newly discovered short story by Isaac Babel, the celebrated Soviet Jewish writer killed in a Stalinist jail on the eve of World War II. Written in 1918 and entitled "Shabbos-Nachamu," it was meant to appear in a series of stories about Hershele Ostropoler, the legendary pauper and wit of Yiddish folk tales; it first was printed in the conservative literary monthly *Znamya* (No. 8, 1964). The same year saw the first Russian publication of some of Sholom Aleichem's tales of misadventures of the ne'er-do-well Menachem Mendel in the mass circulation illustrated weekly *Ogonyok* (No. 35, 1964). A fairy tale-like description of an old-time Jewish miller and of some "quaint" Jewish customs, such as cooking gefilte fish for the Sabbath, was found in Yazen Dyla's Belorussian play *The Young Man from Kroshyn (Polymya,* No. 12, 1965) in which the miller's sixteen-year-old daughter falls in love with a Belorussian farmer's son.

While some of Menachem Mendel's letters to his wife Sheine Sheindel relate merely sad and amusing events in the life of a

classic *schlemiel,* others touch on serious historical events. One of the latter appeared in the reactionary literary monthly *Neva* (No. 10, 1965); it dealt with the notorious blood libel Beilis trial at the turn of the century, and it was properly annotated to explain this fact to Soviet readers.[3] The Ukrainian satirical journal *Perets'* featured a story of Sholom Aleichem's entitled "Gitya Purishkevich" (No. 10, 1966)—it was the fiftieth anniversary of the Yiddish writer's death, and many Soviet journals printed his works or articles about him—but the item chosen by the editors of *Perets'* was, intentionally or not, unfortunate. It related the story of a poor Jewish widow in tsarist Russia who shrewdly succeeds in getting her only son freed from the army. It is not unlikely that the story, instead of evoking sympathy for Sholom Aleichem's poor widow, reinforced the traditional anti-Semitic stereotype of the Jewish draft-dodger which, as we shall see later, was very much alive in Russia during World War II.

Poor, downtrodden, frightened Jews of tsarist Russia's *shtetlech* were described in memoirs of the late Yurii Tynyanov, the famous writer and literary theoretician, which appeared in the foremost liberal literary monthly *Novy mir* (No. 8, 1966). Jewish paupers of the old Pale of Settlement were also mentioned in the memoirs of Vladimir Lidin, a veteran Jewish Russian writer, which appeared in *Teatr,* another liberal journal (No. 1, 1963). Lidin recalls that Venyamin L'vovich Zuskin, the famous actor in Solomon Mikhoels' Yiddish Theater in Moscow, often spoke of his father who was active in a Jewish philanthropic society before the Revolution, and stated that the recollections of his childhood might have helped him to play Senderl in Mendele Mocher Sforim's *Travels of Benjamin III.*

The famous Ukrainian Soviet poet Maxim Ryl's'kyj, who had also in his time translated into Ukrainian much Yiddish verse,

[3] While, on the whole, it is the more "liberal" Soviet publications that are noted for their sympathetic presentation of material of Jewish concern, "reactionary" periodicals, as if to compensate for their all-too-obvious anti-Semitic bias in discussion of present-day Jewish problems, occasionally bend over backwards to show their "friendliness" to the Jews in printing material dealing with the past, particularly tsarist and Nazi. Printing Sholom Aleichem's story about the Beilis trial is a good example. Besides, Sholom Aleichem is the one and only Jewish cultural figure who has always been viewed with favor (officially, at least) by the Soviet authorities, even during the darkest periods of anti-Semitic campaigns. He is also the favored example whenever a Soviet anti-Semitic official wishes to emphasize that "some of my best friends are Jewish." Thus, one I. Ganenko, the first secretary of the Astrakhan province committee of the Communist Party, in an attack on the late Soviet Jewish writer Isaac Babel printed in the same reactionary monthly *(Oktyabr',* No. 4, 1960), resorted to this device. Sholom Aleichem, according to the Party bureaucrat, depicted the suffering of the Jewish poor who were "oppressed by the tsarist regime and by the capitalist system," and is, for that reason, greatly beloved in the U.S.S.R. to this day. By contrast, Babel "sheds tears" over the demise of the "accursed past," and, to the horror and disgust of this Communist functionary, delights in wallowing in lust and in filth.

wrote in his recollections of Itsik Fefer, the Soviet Yiddish poet executed in 1952:

> [Fefer's Yiddish] song was sad. It seemed to reflect the centuries of the Jewish people's tragic history. The song was filled with the melancholy sorrow of country roads and of rain-soaked fields in the autumn, with the abject poverty of provincial little towns, with the hopelessness of old life. . . . Born early in this century, he [Fefer] knew only too well the dreadful words which must now be explained to our young people – words like admission quota, the *Pale of Settlement,* a pogrom . . .
>
> (*Druzhba narodov,* No. 10, 1962; this monthly, as suggested by its title – "Friendship of Peoples" – specializes in material reflecting the multinational character of the Soviet Union.)

The meaning of the term "Pale of Settlement" was well illustrated in Isaac Babel's short story "Elya Isaakovich and Margarita Prokofyevna" which was written in 1916 but was discovered only a half a century later. Printed in *Znamya* (No. 8, 1964) the story relates the encounter between a middle-aged Jewish trader and a Russian prostitute. The businessman must remain for a few days in a town in which Jews are not permitted to reside. Unable to register in a hotel, he lives in the prostitute's apartment. The two establish a perfectly proper landlady-tenant relationship, and exchange complaints about the hardships of their respective occupations. In the end they part like two old friends or, more precisely, like relatives in a closely-knit Russian or Jewish family.

There can be little doubt that from the Jewish point of view the most important single publication in Russia in the 1960's was the memoirs of the late Soviet novelist Ilya Ehrenburg. Most of his recollections deal with the post-revolutionary period and will be referred to later. Only at the beginning does Ehrenburg speak of tsarist Russia.

Thus, in an early installment (the memoirs were serialized over a period of several years in *Novy mir)* Ehrenburg shocked his readers by informing them that the great nineteenth century Russian poet Afanasii Fet was born half-Jewish, but, political reactionary that he was, was terribly upset when he found out the mystery of his birth, and by ordering the letter containing the fateful information placed in his coffin, thought that he would take the secret with him to his grave. As for his own origins, Ehrenburg wrote:

> . . . I was born to a bourgeois Jewish family. My mother held to many [Jewish] traditions. She grew up in a religious family where they feared a God who could not be named, as well as those "gods" who required generous offerings if they were to forego sacrifices of living flesh. . . . My father belonged to the first generation of Russian Jews who attempted to escape the ghetto. My grandfather had disowned him because he had entered a Russian school. But

then, grandfather was not an easy man to get along with, and had disowned all of his children one by one . . .

Like any Jewish child in tsarist Russia, by the age of eight Ehrenburg knew the meaning of the terms enumerated earlier in this chapter by Maxim Ryl's'kyj – the Pale, a pogrom, the admissions quota. In spite of their assimilationist tendencies, Ehrenburg's parents spoke Yiddish. Furthermore, Ehrenburg recalls:

> My father, though an unbeliever, disapproved of Jews who converted to Russian Orthodoxy in order to ease their lot, and thus already in my early childhood I understood that one must not be ashamed of one's ancestry. Somewhere I read that the Jews crucified Christ, while Uncle Lyova said that Christ was a Jew . . . when I first came to *gimnaziya* one of the preparatory students began teasing: "The little kike sits on the bench, let's sit little kike on a fence." Without a moment's hesitation I hit him in the face. But soon we became friends. And no one insulted me again. (*Novy mir*, No. 8-10, 1960)[4]

Traditionally, the Communist version of history maintains that anti-Semitism is endemic only to the ruling classes, which use it, in the final analysis, unsuccessfully, as a stratagem to divert the masses from class struggle. Conversely, anti-Semitism is alien to the working class. The stubborn refusal to even acknowledge the existence of anti-Semitism in the U.S.S.R. is an extension of this theory. Accordingly, references to anti-Semitism in tsarist Russia almost invariably insist that hatred of the Jews was to be found only among the aristocracy and the bourgeoisie. A perfect illustration of this thesis is found in Nikolai Brykin's novel *Not All Is Quiet on the Eastern Front* (*Neva*, No. 10, 1960) according to which in the tsarist army three groups of soldiers were suspect: students, Jews and factory workers, while among

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[4] We learn from Edward J. Brown, *Russian Literature Since the Revolution* (Collier Books, 1969, pp. 248-49), that the episode had already been related by Ehrenburg some thirty-five years earlier, and that its repetition in 1960 demonstrates how traumatic Ehrenburg's first encounter with anti-Semitism was. The 1926 text read as follows:

> I was born in 1891. A Hebrew. Spent my childhood in Moscow, Khamovriki, near a brewery. Warm, sour beer. The workers curse and fight in the barracks. . . . In the spring we went to visit grandfather in Kiev. Imitating him, I prayed, my whole body swaying, and I sniffed clove from a silver container. Then the First Moscow gymnasium. The boys around me said: "The little kike sits on a bench, we'll sit the little kike on a fence." At home I raised mischief – more than was necessary. Set fire to a summer house.

Professor Brown observes:

> . . . an important mnemonic revision has occurred in the account of that boyhood incident written in 1960. In the first version a number of boys sang the unbearable ditty; in the later account it is only one – a preparatory student at that – and Ehrenburg immediately silenced him. He goes on in that passage to insist that there was no great anti-Semitism among the Russian intellectuals of that day. But the experience of life symbolized by the obscene ditty was really unbearable and Ehrenburg never became reconciled to it.

these three groups, presumably, there was no friction of any kind.[5] There were only three works which mentioned the existence of anti-Semitism among the population at large. In each case those infected with anti-Semitism were peasants (presumably, workers were politically too advanced to be taken in by this decoy of the ruling circles), while in two of the three the peasants themselves ultimately saw the error of their ways. Such was the case in Yu. Baltushis' novel *Wasted Years (Druzhba narodov,* No. 2-3, 1960) set in prerevolutionary Lithuania and in Nikolai Rylenkov's semi-autobiographical account of a Ukrainian village *(The Tale of My Childhood, Znamya,* No. 7, 1962). Only in N. Zarudny's play *Marina,* which is based on motifs from Taras Shevchenko's works, is the happy ending lacking, and the Jewish innkeeper is a victim of both sides in a social conflict: the Polish landowners, who know quite well what they are doing, and the Ukrainian peasants and insurgents who fail to understand that the innkeeper Leiba (who bears all this philosophically) is as poor as they are (reviewed by N. Frolov in *Teatr,* No. 8, 1964). Presumably, the author of the play was absolved of responsibility for this un-Marxist portrayal of the sociology of anti-Semitism because of the constrictions imposed on him by his primary source, i.e., the works of the nineteenth-century Ukrainian poet Shevchenko.

Yevgenii Gabrilovich, a veteran film script writer, recalled witnessing in his childhood a pogrom. He saw in Voronezh a Jewish watchmaker screaming in horror and boys "of another religion than the watchmaker's" gleefully enjoying the spectacle. Gabrilovich wanted to go out and join in the fun, but was told that, being also Jewish, he should be crying and not thinking of fun and games: "And so, for the first time in my life, I understood that I have displeased somebody with something or other, and that it is my destiny to make merry with others only on some occasions." Gabrilovich then related how he and a few other Jewish boys were given a special entrance examination in Russian, in a gymnasium, which was so difficult that, people thought, no person could possibly pass it, except perhaps for the teacher who made it up. Gabrilovich flunked the exam, but one of the Jewish boys did pass it somehow *(Iskusstvo Kino,* No. 8, 1967).

Otherwise, references to anti-Semitism in tsarst Russia corresponded to the familiar stereotype: there was *some* anti-Semitism—not too much—but it was found among the ruling classes alone. There was little, if any, among the working people, while enlightened men, and particularly the intellectuals, were active in combatting anti-Jewish prejudice.

[5] It is surprising that Brykin's "Trotskyite" suggestion that the peasants were more acceptable to the tsarist regime escaped his reviewers' attention.

In *A Spring,* a juvenile novel by the veteran writer Alexandra Brushtein, published in 1961, there were references to the Dreyfus affair and to the fact that such famous writers as Chekhov and Korolenko championed the cause of the French Jewish captain; the novel also contained references to Jewish revolutionaries in Russia (reviewed by L. Lebedeva in *Novy mir,* No. 2, 1962). In the memoirs of the late children's poet and translator Samuil Marshak *(In the Beginning of Life, Novy mir,* No. 2, 1964) the point is made that even as a boy he, Marshak, knew that anti-Dreyfusards were also enemies of revolutionary students, and were bad people generally. Marshak recalls how he and his brother instinctively refused to accept presents from one such bad man.[6] Abram Kagan, a Soviet Yiddish novelist, discussed his plans in 1964; he said he was at work on a novel to be entitled *The Affair of the Cave* which was to deal with the Beilis trial. According to Kagan, he would present the case as a provocation by reactionaries intent on distracting workers from class struggle *(Druzhba narodov,* No. 7, 1964). And Ilya Ehrenburg's recollections of the Kishinev pogrom were inseparable from his memories of the noble activities of Tolstoy, Korolenko and Chekhov. Still, he added ruefully, he did not suspect at the time that anti-Semitism, which he had once considered a temporary obscurantist aberration, would continue to plague him for the rest of his life *(Novy mir,* No. 8-10, 1960).

Another tenet of the Communist faith forbids viewing anti-Semitism as a supra-class phenomenon. Anti-Semitism, it is argued, is an affliction of *poor* Jews. Rich Jews are always somehow able to escape anti-Semitic restrictions, not to speak of persecutions. Perhaps the most obscene recent example of this dogmatic approach may be found in Khrushchev's speech on March 8, 1963, during which the then Soviet Premier related an alleged story about one Kogan who, he said, had been a Nazi general's interpreter at Stalingrad: "So it seems that one Jew served as an interpreter with von Paulus' staff, while another, serving in the ranks of our army, took part in the capture of von

[6] In general, Marshak's pronouncements on the subject of anti-Semitism were highly circumspect when compared, for example, with those of Ehrenburg. Among the most outspoken was his comment about Shylock's famous monologue in Shakespeare's *Merchant of Venice* ("I am a Jew. Hath not a Jew eyes?"): "While reading Shakespeare, one thinks sadly—how could it happen that humanity has not as yet understood such simple, clear, easily understood words about the equality of men of all races and nationalities, such as those which Shakespeare utters with Shylock's lips?" ("About Shakespeare," *Novy mir,* No. 9, 1964).

The inaugural issue of *Behinot,* a new Israeli journal of Soviet and East European Jewish studies (No. 1, 1970), features an important contribution by Matityahu Minc. Mr. Minc indicates that either the late Samuil Marshak himself or his censors suppressed an important chapter in his memoirs. It appears that as a young man Marshak was active in the Zionist movement, contributed to Zionist periodicals, and was personally acquainted with Itzhak Ben-Zvi (Shimshelevitz), the future President of the State of Israel.

Paulus and his interpreter. People's conduct is assessed not from the national but from the class point of view."

This view of anti-Semitism was faithfully reflected in most of Soviet literature of the 1960's, including the Yiddish. Natan Rybak, a Jew who writes in Ukrainian, in his *Such Is Life,* a novel about Balzac's visit to Berdichev, the "Jewish capital" of old Ukraine, took pains to describe both good poor Jews and bad rich Jews (*Raduga,* a Russian-language literary monthly published in Kiev, No. 4, 1966). I. Knyazev, in his review of a Russian translation of Grigori Polyanker's Yiddish novel *The Secret of Longevity* which appeared in the same periodical (No. 8, 1964) wrote approvingly:

> Grigori Polyanker depicts the embittered class struggle among the Jews during the prerevolutionary period and during the collectivization [i.e., late 1920's]. He succeeded in demonstrating that it was precisely because of the class differentiation among the Jews that even in Petlyura's [anti-Semitic Ukrainian] government there was a Jewish minister who tried to deceive the Jewish poor and to lend support to Petlyura.

Finally, an essay by a Jewish Soviet writer, Moisei Finkel', pointed out approvingly that the Ukrainian poet Shevchenko, said to have been beloved not only by Soviet Yiddish writers (Shvartsman, Fininberg, Fefer) but also by pre-Soviet ones (Semyon Frug and, inevitably, Sholom Aleichem), was a great friend of the Jewish poor but an implacable foe of the Jewish exploiters.

Literary works set in prerevolutionary Russia frequently offer interesting portraits of various Jewish types. A Jewish fiddler reminiscent of Chagall paintings appeared in some newly published verse by the great poet Osip Mandelshtam, who died in the late 1930's in a Soviet labor camp (Nikolai Chukovsky, "Encounters with Mandelshtam," *Moskva,* No. 8, 1964). Romantic Jewish gangsters of old Odessa appeared in the newly published prose version of Isaac Babel's *Sunset* (*Literaturnaya Rossiya,* No. 47, 1964). One of them, Froim Grach, was portrayed in a forgotten 1933 story of the same name. Froim Grach had offered to collaborate with the newly established Soviet authorities, but they had him shot "because the future has no need of such people" (I. Babel', "Froim Grach," *Znamya,* No. 8, 1964). A. Loitsker, reviewing I. Druker's novel *The Musicians* in *Raduga* (No. 8, 1965) pointed out that:

> I. Druker's novel is profoundly national in the types it portrays and in its saturation with details of specifically Jewish life. It resur-

[7] The novel describes itinerant Jewish musicians early in the nineteenth century, and is set in what is now Poland.

rects customs that have long ago become forgotten and are now of only ethnographic interest.[7]

Some of the attempts to recreate Jewish historical settings are quite successful. Such, for example, are the portraits of a Talmudic scholar and a Jewish cabbie in Ilya Konstantinovsky's *On the Dnester,* a novel set in Moldavia on the eve of the Revolution (*Dnester,* a Russian-language literary monthly published in Kishinev, No. 6. 1962). Nikolai Rylenkov is effective in his portraits of two Jewish peddlers in the Ukraine: one is a patriarchal old Jew, faithful to tradition, while the other no longer even observes the laws of *kashruth* (*Znamya,* No. 7, 1962). Occasionally, such descriptions are ludicrous. Thus, in Boris Vadetsky's novel *After the Filarets,*[8] a fictionalized biography of Shevchenko, a rich Jew is shown reading the *Megillah,* in which book, according to the Soviet novelist, Haman is cruelly punished by God for having tried to kill all Jews on the night of the Exodus from Egypt (*Sovetskaya Ukraina,* No. 3, 1961).

[8] The Filarets was a student society in XIX c. Vilna made famous by the Polish poet Mickiewicz, its most illustrious member.

II. FROM THE REVOLUTION TO WORLD WAR II

BECAUSE THE prerevolutionary period is the only one in Russian history during which the existence of anti-Semitism is, while minimized, at least acknowledged, Soviet literature can treat the subject with some degree of truth. Things change abruptly as we move from Russia of the tsars to the Soviet era. From now on the problem's existence is not only minimized, often it is simply denied. Unless the carriers of anti-Semitism can be shown as being clearly beyond the Soviet authorities' control—e.g., members of enemy armed forces—the problem's presence is merely wished away or passed over in premeditated silence.

Soviet literature is in general oriented toward the future. The creed of Socialist Realism requires that it emphasize the desired over the real, if necessary by occasionally portraying distant goals as tangible achievements. Since, however, this would deprive Soviet literature of all semblance of truth, an allowance is sometimes made for the necessity of portraying undesirable features of Soviet life as "survivals of the past," be they "capitalist," religious or ethnic. Such features are said to be particularly long-lived and tenacious when they pertain to human consciousness, to the spiritual and the psychological, rather than to the economic or the physical. Thus, the argument goes, the Soviet authorities could, through appropriate legislation, separate the Church from

the State, but they are powerless to prevent some of their people from holding religious beliefs. They could abolish capitalism in industry but they could not uproot the "capitalist" instinct of greed from the minds of men. Thus, even according to the tenets of Socialist Realism one could still portray in Soviet literature "anachronistic" anti-Jewish prejudice and "atavistic" Jewish responses. Yet, as shall be seen, this is not the case. What would surely be denounced in Soviet literary criticism as excessive "varnishing of reality," i.e., an absurd chasm between dream and reality, is not only condoned but is, indeed, enforced in Soviet writers' treatment of the Jewish theme. This is the more remarkable in view of the fact that the great bulk of post-Stalin Soviet literature dealing with the prewar period is set during the Revolution and the Civil War, i.e., at a time when the Soviet regime was not yet firmly in power and when, as is commonly known, a wave of anti-Jewish pogroms swept the country. To be exact, except for Ilya Ehrenburg's memoirs, among all those examined only *two* writers mentioned the subject at all, and one of them did so merely while discussing a classic of Soviet literature, Nikolai Ostrovsky's *How the Steel Was Tempered,* a novel first published thirty-five years ago. Lidiya Levina (judging by her name, herself Jewish) noted approvingly that in Ostrovsky's book workers are depicted as saving Jews during a pogrom, and that Jews and non-Jews are portrayed among those who fight and die for the Soviet cause (*Druzhba narodov,* No. 11, 1964). And A. Rut'ko, the little-known author of a novel entitled *A Bewitching Star,* pointed out that during the Civil War, in which many Jews fought on the Soviet side, the anti-Soviet Whites not only shot every Jew and every Communist within their reach, but also meted out severe punishment to any Gentile who would try to help either of the two. (*Nash sovremennik,* No. 3, 1960).

Different periods in Soviet history are associated with the growth of some literary genres and the decline of others. This is due partly to literary causes and partly to factors that are only indirectly linked with artistic processes. The sudden outpouring of the semi-literary and semi-historical memoirs after Stalin's death is certainly to be ascribed primarily to the wave of "rehabilitations," mostly posthumous, of men who had, for longer or briefer periods, been consigned to the category of Orwellian unpersons. Many of these men were Jews, and their portraits began to appear in literary and artistic memoirs written by survivors of Stalin's purges and, on occasion, by those who may be described as accomplices in the purges. Dmytro Kosaryk, writing in the Ukrainian literary monthly *Dnipro* (No. 1, 1961), recalled Osher Shvartsman (Schwartzmann), who is often called the first poet to be produced by Soviet Yiddish literature. Shvartsman was

"discovered" by the well-known Ukrainian poet Pavlo Tychyna, who translated his verse even prior to the Yiddish poet's early death during the Civil War. An article by I. Abramsky in the art periodical *Iskusstvo* (No. 10, 1964) described the career of Yuri Moiseyevich Pen, a teacher of painting in the provincial town of Vitebsk who, during the first post-revolutionary years, had to contend with such difficult pupils as Kazimir Malevich, the notorious Suprematist creator of "white on white" canvases, and also one Marc Chagall whom he warned to mend his ways and abandon his silly experiments least he squander his real gifts as a realist painter.

The famous actor Solomon Mikhoels, the one-time guiding spirit of Moscow's State Yiddish Theater, died in 1948 in an automobile accident widely rumored to have been engineered by Stalin's police. Somewhat later his theater was closed and Mikhoels was posthumously denounced as a bourgeois Jewish nationalist. Following Stalin's death Mikhoels was cleared of these charges, although the theater was never reopened. A collection of Mikhoels' essays was brought out in 1960, and four years later there appeared a volume of reminiscences by his friends and admirers. The book was reviewed by Ye. Polyakova in *Novy mir* (No. 11, 1965):

> The art of Mikhoels forms an integral part of the history and culture of the Jewish people which he knew in all of their major and minor embodiments. These ranged from folk customs and ceremonies to features of modern living, from the grandiloquence of the ancient tongue, to the vernacular chatter of the new, from the Biblical book of Job to the travelling salesmen of Sholom Aleichem.

Portraits of the patriarchal Jewish *shtetl* appeared in the early 1960's in connection with the 75th birthday of Zmitrok Byadulya (1886-1941), one of the founders of Belorussian literature, whose real name was Samuil Plavnik. M. Yarosh wrote a review of V. Kovalenko's book devoted to Byadulya's verse (*Voprosy literatury*, No. 10, 1964):

> Born to an impoverished Jewish family, raised in an isolated village where even the echoes of the Revolution of 1905 hardly penetrated, Byadulya was then exposed to the deadening scholasticism of a *cheder* [a religious elementary school—M.F.]. Byadulya's "assimilation" of progressive and democratic ideas of his time was painfully slow.

With the exception now of World War II, the Revolution and the ensuing Civil War have been the most important events to captivate the Soviet literary imagination. There is every indication that this will continue for years to come, since the two cataclysms attract the artist not only with their enormity and heroism but, perhaps even more importantly, by their moral and ideological

rectitude. With the periodic campaigns of rewriting Soviet history, during which heroes and villains change designations as do the policies with which they are identified, the Soviet writer must surely find it assuring to deal with the two events that have never been questioned ideologically and have never in the public mind been soiled with the blood of men other than those who fought the land of the Soviets, arms in hand. For the writer intent on portraying Russia's Jews, the Revolution and the Civil War present an additional attraction as the only period in Soviet history during which they were still "ethnic" enough to permit some picturesque, exotic effects, and the only time when – as attested to by some of the most famed classics of Soviet writing – the Jews were very numerous among the participants in the epic struggle and among the largely sympathetic onlookers.

Jews are portrayed in two Belorussian novels published in the 1960's in the Minsk literary monthly *Polymya* and set during the first years of the Soviet regime, and in one memoir of the same period. Mikola Loban's *Shemety* (No. 8, 1963) describes a Jewish boy, son of an impoverished petty trader turned truck farmer, who together with some Gentile boys organizes a volunteer fire brigade. Tsishka Gartny's *For One's Own Freedom, For the Country's Freedom* (No. 12, 1965), unpublished for nearly a half a century, was written in 1920, and this may account for its richness in historical detail. Set in a Belorussian *shtetl* it depicts young Communists of various ethnic backgrounds. One of the most curious features of Gartny's novel is its love story which involves a Jewish girl and a Belorussian boy. In his comments about the couple the author displays a curious double standard toward nationalism: the girl's Jewish nationalist sentiments (attributed here, of all things, to pernicious influences of her Bundist past) is unequivocally condemned, while praise and satisfaction are evoked by the boy's awakening awareness of his Belorussian national identity. Wladzimir Kalesnik's memoirs (No. 8, 1965) include a portrait of Benjamin Epstein who was active in Communist Party work in Polish-held Belorussia and showed much courage and defiance after being apprehended by Polish police.

Ilya Sel'vinsky, the recently deceased Soviet Russian poet, published an autobiographical novel set in 1917 (*Oktyabr'*, No. 6 and 7, 1966). *O My Youth,* which appears to have been modeled on Valentin Katayev's well-known *A Lovely White Sail Gleams,* features three boys, two of them Russians and one a Jew. Of the Russian boys one is a son of a poor fisherman while the father of the second is a millionaire. The Jewish boy, Sima Grinbakh (i.e., Sel'vinsky himself), is a son of a Bolshevik lawyer.

The best portrait of a Jew shown against the background of the

Civil War is found in Oleksandr Kopylenko's Ukrainian novel *Relatives* printed in the Kiev monthly *Vitchyzna* (No. 2, 1961). An octogenarian *shtetl* Jew, a pauper, lives on charity in a dilapidated wooden synagogue. In fact, he has not ventured outside the walls of the synagogue in six years. He is confused by rumors that a revolution has taken place and that his town is now ruled by the Reds. He does not quite understand what the Bolsheviks want, but he has heard that they hate the rich, the same rich who have always despised him, a Jewish beggar. Upon discovering that the leader of the Bolshevik soldiers in town is a namesake of his, the old beggar summons all his courage and goes to see him in order to ask for a favor: would he, the new master of the *shtetl,* visit him, the despised beggar, in the synagogue and, further, not deny the rumors that he is a relative. The Bolshevik commissar agrees to oblige, and the old beggar experiences the most triumphant moment of his life when the *shtetl's* rich and mighty come to implore him to intercede with his "relative."

Three authors, two of them writing in Yiddish, described Jewish life in the U.S.S.R. during the interwar period. A Jewish collective farm was described in I. Gordon's *Three Brothers,* a novel printed in 1963, while Birobidzhan – a favorite theme of writers in the 1930's but one that is now nearly extinct – was the setting of two new short stories of Boris Miller. One of these is a variation on the theme of you-should-have-seen-this-wilderness-when-we-got-here; the second has a "complex" narrator, a Polish Jew deported from Argentina for left-wing activities who has finally settled in the Soviet "Jewish homeland" of Birobidzhan. Gordon's novel was reviewed by P. Panenko in *Druzhba narodov* (No. 10, 1964) and Miller's stories appeared in the little-known periodical *Dal'nii vostok,* published in Khabarovsk, the major urban center near Birobidzhan (No. 2, 1963). A Jewish university student who dies during the Soviet-Finnish war of 1940 was portrayed in Vasilii Roslyakov's novella *One of Us* (*Novy mir,* No. 2, 1962).

In the mid-1960's Soviet readers were informed that three of Soviet fiction's most famous Jewish literary characters were modeled after real persons. Writing in the literary monthly *Moskva* (No. 7, 1964), Ye. Knipovich, a well-known scholar, divulged that Levinson, the heroic Jewish commander of a Civil War guerrilla detachment in Alexander Fadeyev's celebrated novel *The Rout* (1927), was modeled, according to the author, on the Red guerrilla commander I. M. Pevzner, whom Fadeyev observed at close range in action. The specialized bibliographic periodical *V mire knig* (No. 2, 1965) printed a brief notice by V. Chupakhin disclosing that another of Soviet literature's famous "positive heroes," the Communist organizer of a collective farm in *Virgin Soil Upturned* (1931), one of the two best novels by the Soviet Union's most

famous living novelist Mikhail Sholokhov, was also not entirely a product of his creator's imagination. According to Chupakhin, Davydov (who is in the course of the novel never explicitly identified as a Jew) was modeled after A. A. Plotkin, a former navy mechanic who, together with twenty-five thousand other Communists, was sent by the Party to collectivize the country's agriculture. The story's interest was enhanced by the fact that both the Jew, Plotkin, and the anti-Semitic Nobel Prize winner, Sholokhov, are still alive, and the article carried the former's photograph and a brief note stating that he is at present a director of a cement plant near Moscow. In answer to Chupakhin's query Sholokhov declared somewhat evasively, as if embarrassed by the disclosure but unable to simply deny it, that the hero of *Virgin Soil Upturned* embodies "typical features" not only of Plotkin but of other men whom he had met during the collectivization campaign.

Leonid Utyosov, the Soviet Union's best-known jazz band leader, published some recollections of his native Odessa in the monthly *Moskva* (No. 9, 1964) and took the opportunity to inform his readers that Benya Krik, the immortal gangster from Isaac Babel's *Odessa Tales* (1927), had a real life counterpart, the colorful king of Odessa's underworld, Vinitsky, popularly known as Mishka Yaponchik ("Mike the Jap"). Vinitsky and his notorious one-eyed lieutenant Meyer Hersh had promised the Bolsheviks to "go straight" and were allowed to organize an armed detachment which was sent to fight the anti-Soviet forces of Petlyura. Soon, however, the former convicts tired of military service, and demanded that they be sent home. When a Communist stationmaster refused to give them a train, a fight ensued during which the real "Benya Krik" was shot dead.

For reasons mentioned earlier in this study, prior to World War II Soviet literature dealing with the Civil War tended to portray the Jews in favorable terms. In post-Stalin Soviet writing not only do we encounter a more realistic and "even-handed" approach, but also, as a response to the anti-Semitic Soviet policies of the postwar period, a variety of Jewish villains. Some of these could be justified on artistic or even historical grounds, but there were also others which confirmed traditional anti-Semitic stereotypes and which were obviously intended to incite to hatred of the Jews.

The Yellow Mills, a new novel by the Soviet Yiddish writer I. Falikman published in Russian in the Kiev literary monthly *Raduga* (No. 5, 1963), featured, with textbook simplicity and precision, an illustration of Leninist theories of "proletarian internationalism" and of "two nations within each nation." The first, it will be recalled, presupposes friendship based on a community of interests between working people of all nations, and the second

negates the existence of supra-class national unity, since within every nation there are the poor and the rich, and the two are always at war. It was the faithful application of the latter thesis, as we shall see later, that begot the monstrous Soviet version of recent Jewish history according to which the Nazis, though outwardly hostile toward all Jews, "really" hated only Jewish workers and were not at all above cooperating with rich Jews. In Falikman's novel a Jewish boy gleefully observes how, during the Civil War, rich Jews get their right deserts from upright Bolsheviks whose ranks include men of all ethnic backgrounds, and then sorrowfully watches, during the temporary advances of Marshal Pilsudski's anti-Soviet Polish forces, executions of Bolshevik Poles, Jews, Russians and even Chinese (the novel was written before the Sino-Soviet rift). The ability to distinguish between "good" pro-Communist Jews and "bad" anti-Communist ones was hailed in an article by Beso Zhgenti published in the Russian daily *Zarya Vostoka* (November 17, 1964) which appears in Tbilisi, the capital of Georgia. The beneficiary of Zhgenti's praise was Gertsel (Herzl) Baazov, a Georgian Jewish writer killed during the Great Purges in 1937. Baazov, the author of *Itska Rizhinashvili,* a play about a pre-Soviet Georgian Jewish Communist, was the first writer to describe the ancient Jewish community of the Transcaucasian republic.

That political loyalties supersede ethnic ones was spelled out in Yulian Semyonov's novel *No Password Necessary* which was printed in the Young Communist League's journal *Molodaya gvardiya* (No. 3, 1965). Semyonov relates why, during the Civil War, a Jewish professor living in Zhitomir, a city then occupied by anti-Semitic Whites, refused to flee to Soviet-ruled Russia. It appears that the professor, in addition to his unwillingness to leave his native city where six generations of his family lived and died, is aware of the fact that materialist Bolsheviks will have no use for him because, though a Jew, he is a believer in anti-Marxist scientific theories. Boris Balter's well-written novel *Goodbye, Boys,* published in the liberal youth monthly *Yunost'* (No. 8 and 9, 1962), had a Jewish boy complain about his overprotective parents who refused to allow him to leave for military school; there were also other vignettes of Soviet Jewish types of the 1920's, such as that of a barber who became a "normal" greedy businessman, though only recently he had been a brave volunteer soldier in the Soviet Army. Anatoli Galiyev's play *The Needle and the Bayonet (Teatr,* No. 4, 1966) and V. Tevekelyan's novel *Limestone Won't Melt (Moskva,* No. 3, 1962) depict, respectively, a black marketeer named Dora Soloveichik and a gang of Jewish gold and diamond smugglers. Though both works are set during the Civil War, there are reasons to suspect that they were inspired

by the strongly anti-Semitic Soviet campaign against so-called economic offenses then in full swing, with trials that were widely publicized by the press and with scores of death sentences meted out to people pronounced guilty of the same offenses and bearing names strikingly similar to those found in the works of Galiyev and Tevekelyan.

More ominous parallels were suggested by two works published in the 1960's, one of which provoked a discussion in which a work of fiction was denounced *ex cathedra* as a falsification of Communist Party history. Only a few months prior to his death, Emmanuil Kazakevich, who began his career as a Yiddish writer in Birobidzhan but later became famous as a Russian novelist, published his short story "The Enemies." The story appeared in the April 20, 1962, issue of *Izvestiya,* then the country's largest newspaper, and was built around a story of Lenin's onetime friend and later bitter political foe, Yuli Martov (pseudonym of Tsederbaum). According to Kazakevich, Lenin, guided by magnanimity as well as by shrewd political sense, allowed the Menshevik leader to emigrate. Kazakevich was then bitterly attacked in the official journal of Party history, *Voprosy istorii KPSS* (No. 4, 1963) for his portrayal of Lenin as a sentimental humanist. Whether Kazakevich's portrait was indeed correct is immaterial. What is more relevant is that the attack on Kazakevich teemed with such names as Bernstein, Abramovich, Yudin, Dan and other Social Democratic foes of Bolshevism. These attacks created the impression that, even in Lenin's days, Communism's most embittered foes, the renegade Russian Social Democratic leaders who then broke with the Bolsheviks, were almost all Jews.

Vitali Zakrutkin is a minor novelist with impeccably Stalinist credentials. A Don Cossack, he often imitates the literary mannerisms as well as political pronouncements of his famous neighbor Mikhail Sholokhov. In his novel *Creation of The World* (*Oktyabr,* No. 6 and 7, 1967) Zakrutkin created one of the first Soviet literary portraits of the archvillain of Soviet history, Leon Trotsky, who has hitherto been either completely avoided in Soviet literature or, at most, referred to in one or two contemptuous sentences. Zakrutkin's Trotsky reeks of anti-Semitism, and though his Jewish origins are never specifically emphasized, he is endowed with a number of traits (e.g., inability to understand "real" Russia) that are associated with anti-Semitic stereotypes. Curiously, Trotsky's friends and allies mentioned in the novel are nearly all Jews, which, of course, necessitated some rewriting of history with race rather than politics serving as criterion. Thus, Zakrutkin's Trotsky is admired by Kamenev but not by Bukharin, by Zinoviev but not by Rykov, by Radek but not by Voronsky, etc. Zakrutkin's venom reaches the heights of absurdity when he has Hitler praise

Trotsky's book *My Life* as a work that has taught him many useful things. Nevertheless, the Trotskyites, Hitler's love for them notwithstanding, cannot refrain from doublecrossing even their admirers. In order "to bring about tensions between the U.S.S.R. and Germany," the engineer the shooting in 1932 of a counsellor of the German Embassy in Moscow. The assassin's name is not only unmistakably Jewish – Yuda Stern – but it fortunately coincides with Soviet propaganda's favorite nickname for Trotsky, "Yuda (i.e., Judas) Trotsky."

There can be no doubt, however, that the most explicitly anti-Semitic work among those that have come to our attention (there may very well have been others) was Anatoli Dimarov's Ukrainian novel *Through the Roads of Life* which appeared in the Kiev literary periodical *Dnipro* (No. 9 and 10, 1963). Dimarov's novel is set in the Ukraine immediately after the Civil War, and among its chief protagonists are a district Communist Party secretary Grigori Ginsburg and the local chief of the secret police Solomon Lander. Both men are obviously Jewish. Of Ginsburg we learn little, other than he is a good man and an exemplary Communist. Dimarov's attention is centered on the villain Lander whom we first meet when he mutters something about "these damned Ukrainians" (he uses the pejorative term *khokhly*) whom he hates and despises. Dimarov then proceeds to offer his readers some historical background for Lander's relentless enmity toward the Ukrainians:

> The Landers had clashed head-on with the Ukrainian nation already in those distant times when Polish nobility appointed the Jews concessionnaires [*arendatory*] of Orthodox Churches. Isaac Lander also took up this racket [*gesheft*]. He gave a rich Polish nobleman a sackful of money and was given in exchange in the Podole region three churches, including their priests and deacons, as well as all of their inventory and all their parishioners.
>
> From that time on Isaac became a wall separating God from the faithful. If you want to baptize your child, first you must go to Isaac, and only then you may proceed to the church. If you wish to bury your dead, you must first grease Isaac's palm, and then he will issue you a permit. If it's blessing Easter food you desire, you can bless it to your heart's content, provided you first render unto Isaac that which is Isaac's, and only then render unto God that which is God's. And so the silent poor carried their last possessions earned with their sweat and blood to Isaac, whose hand was always outstretched. They cursed in whisper the greedy infidel, saying that he was worse than a Tatar. A Tatar might attack you, grab whatever he can, and then go back to his Crimea. But this leech, they said, is always at work: you cannot get rid of him, or wish him away with the sign of the cross!
>
> Having saved up some cash, Lander began to size up other

churches, until Zaporozhye Cossacks caught up with him . . . But while the slow-witted Cossacks debated whether the infidel is to be hanged or drowned, Jehovah saw his faithful servant and sent some Polish noblemen [to his rescue]. And soon the Cossacks' own long-haired heads began to sway in greasy nooses, for the greater glory of God.

Isaac's grandson, Chaim Lander, wanted nothing to do with churches. The more so since there was no Polish nobility, either . . . Why fight the *goyim* [in the original—M.F.] when it is so much simpler and easier to bloat them with vodka and then strip them of their last possessions. And so Chaim built an inn near a highway and engaged in legal racket [*gesheft*]. Any sheep that happened to be passing by would lose some of its fleece.

In his old age Chaim was mistreated by the ungrateful Ukrainian nation. He was raided by the *haidamaki* who burned down his inn to the ground—and they even took the little sack filled with gold that he had buried in the ground. May they, and their children, and their children's children never see a penny again!

From then on the Lander family referred to the Ukrainians only as "those damned *khokhly*."

The Lander family, God be praised, did not die out. It survived all storms and spread its claw-like branches throughout the Ukrainian land. Some Landers were rich and other Landers less so, some Landers lived in Podole and other Landers lived near Kiev, but they were all renowned for their clannishness and their traditional hatred of "those damned *khokhly*." Not only, they said, may one cheat a *khokhol*. Indeed, one should cheat a *khokhol*, and mock him, too.

Our Lander was born in Poltava province to a family of a small-town trader. He was the fourteenth child and Hersh, touched by this omen of God's infinite mercy, had him named Solomon.

Solomon's childhood was like that of all of his contemporaries. In the winter he attended a *cheder* where he memorized the Talmud. In the summer, together with other urchins, he visited country fairs where he accosted slow-moving peasants, teasing them for their being *khokhly: khokhol-maznitsa, davai draznitstsa!* . . . Solomon's future was viewed differently by his two parents. The father had hopes to see his son a rich merchant, while his mother wanted him to become a rabbi or, at the very least, a *tzadik* [!]. But Solomon had other ideas. Even as a youth he displayed not only unusual intelligence, but a sharp political acumen as well, and he joined the [Jewish Social Democratic] Bund. The same unfailing acumen helped him appraise correctly the situation after the Revolution and, after breaking with the Bund and joining the RSDRP [Dimarov tries to avoid the term "Communist"—M.F.], Lander began his career. He chose Lev Trotsky as his model, imitating him in all respects, down to the pettiest detail of dress, including even his mannerisms. Since, however, Russia could support on her shoulders only one Trotsky, Lander chose to be modest and to rest

> content with remaining, at least for the time being, a Trotsky on a district scale . . . There was only one flaw in his otherwise spotless character. Try as he would, he could not rid himself of a flaw he had inherited from grandpa Motele, which he had in turn inherited from great-grandpa Chaim – a hatred of "those damned *khokhly*" . . . He himself could not point to the cause for the disdain for the Ukrainians that was found in his entire family. Possibly, this was the disdain a thief feels for his victim. Otherwise, how could a thief retain any self-respect? He must spit at people the labor of whose hands feeds him and his children, the future thieves.

Dimarov, as we see, utilizes every important weapon in the anti-Semitic arsenal. His villain is officially a Trotskyite and a Soviet secret policeman but he is also a "Jewish nationalist" (the common Soviet definition of Bund), a professing Jew and a student of the Talmud who very nearly became a rabbi and a merchant; he is also an enemy of Ukrainians. Thus Dimarov's Jew offers a convenient object of hatred for every taste. A "true" Soviet Communist may hate him for his nationalism, religiosity and bourgeois origins. An anti-Soviet reader will find him a convenient target since he exemplifies the most hateful feature of the Soviet regime – the police terror. And all readers of Ukrainian, which means all readers of the novel, since Ukrainian is a minority language spoken almost exclusively by members of that minority, will find Lander hateful if only because of his repeatedly underscored disdain and hatred of Ukrainians.

And lest anyone be content to believe that there are "good" Jews as well as "bad" ones, the Soviet novelist provides a long historical introduction in which the Jew – here, the Lander family – emerges as an exploiter and an oppressor, who is to be hated as a capitalist of a particularly odious variety (the owner of a pub), as an agent of a traditional enemy of the Ukrainian nation (Poland), and – perhaps for the first time in Soviet literature – as an infidel foe of Christendom, a defiler of churches and tormentor of Orthodox believers.

And to disabuse anyone of the notion that the infamous line of Landers will be reformed under the beneficent influence of Socialism, the Soviet novelist confidently predicted that Lander's children, too, will be "thieves."

This portrayal of the Jew appeared in a "Socialist" state, twenty-two years after the massacre of Babi Yar, in the city of Babi Yar.

III. THE NAZI INVASION

THE ARTIFICIALITY, contrivance and insincerity that are so characteristic of the great bulk of Soviet literature may be traced to a wide variety of factors that shape it. The most immediate of these, no doubt, is the chasm that separates physical and intellectual reality from the "dynamic reality" of the visions and projections into a distant Communist future that Soviet literature portrays as present-day reality. The fact that Soviet writing employs the devices of traditional realism only aggravates the effect of falsehood and pretense. As Abram Tertz (Andrei Sinyavsky) correctly pointed out in *What is Socialist Realism,* the incongruity would be lessened were Soviet art frankly religious or fantastic.

The distortions and hypocrisy that are so strikingly in evidence in Soviet literature's portrayal of the Jews are due to the fact that the Soviet State's ultimate goal of complete assimilation of the Jews is presented as a *fait accompli.* Hence the tendency either not to portray the Jews at all, or else depict them as ethnically neuter men and women with no problems and aspirations that are due solely to their Jewishness.

Soviet literature dealing with the Nazi invasion is, on the whole, more real than that, say, depicting the labor enthusiasm of the Five Year Plans or the paeans of praise of Stalin of the postwar years, because it has been permitted to present relatively truthfully the powerful upsurge of Russian patriotism, the hatred

of German occupiers, and the travail and heroism of the Soviet population – rather than, say, stubborn loyalty to the Communist party and its wise leaders. Paradoxically it is this literature that is most hypocritical in its portrayal of the Jew because it was during World War II that a Jew's origins – even if he had no Jewish ties or loyalties – overshadowed, in the end, whatever other attributes he may have had. In the final analysis, it mattered little whether he was conscious of his descent, whether he was Communist or anti-Soviet, observant or atheist, whether he spoke Yiddish or Russian, whether he was an intellectual, worker or collective farmer. In Nazi-occupied parts of the U.S.S.R., as elsewhere in Europe, a non-Jew had some prospects of survival; the Jew had almost none.

Portrayals of the Soviet Jew in wartime settings in literature of the Stalin era were so blatantly false – or altogether suppressed – that a change was inevitable when the dictator's death seemed to permit a greater degree of "sincerity" in literature, which was among the very first demands voiced by Soviet writers. Since, however, there has been no official reversal of Soviet policies vis-a-vis the Jews – as evidenced by the failure to undo most of Stalin's wrongs toward them, or even to admit that such crimes were, indeed, ever perpetrated toward them as a group – and no modification in the doctrine of Socialist Realism as such, post-Stalin literature's portrait of the Jew during the Nazi period is inconsistent. Whenever conditions permit, whenever a timid "thaw" allows the writer greater latitude, there are attempts to discuss the Holocaust with a degree of candor. And when the "thaw" is inevitably superseded by an ideological "freeze," the portrait of the Jew during World War II reverts to the Stalinist model. Indeed, the problem of depicting the Jew during the Nazi period has with time become the litmus test separating Soviet neo-Stalinists from the Soviet "liberals," while the ascendancy of either camp during any given period became a reliable indicator of general political conditions in the U.S.S.R. And since these have been in a state of flux since Stalin's death, the references to wartime Jewish martyrdom and heroism, all but completely absent during the preceding period, were neither overly numerous nor lengthy. As a rule, they were limited to hints, asides and post-scripts, clearly of secondary importance, and stated as if only to avert complaints that they were completely suppressed.

Thus, among the hundreds of works depicting Nazi occupation of Western provinces of the U.S.S.R. only a very few refer to the subject at all, and these only fleetingly. The late Konstantin Paustovsky, a very liberal writer, most likely tried to remain within permissible limits. In his autobiography (*Novy mir*, No. 10, 1963) he recalls the Jewish writer Roskin who volunteered for

Army service, but fearing what the Nazis might do to him if he were taken prisoner, carried with him poison:

> Near the city of Vyazma, Roskin's detachment was surrounded. The Germans began to question prisoners and to separate the Jews. The interpreter . . . said that Roskin was an Armenian. It had seemed that he was saved. But some scoundrel betrayed Roskin, and the guards pushed him to the side where the Jews were. It was then that Roskin swallowed the poison. I was told that he did not suffer long.

The fact that even among the prisoners of war, all of whom were cruelly mistreated, the Jews were singled out for "special treatment" was mentioned by at least four other Soviet authors. Of these, Yuri Pilyar wrote a documentary novel about the Mauthausen concentration camp (*Men Remain Men, Yunost',* No. 8, 1963). Mikhail Sholokhov's *Fate of a Man* (1957) and Vladimir Maksimov's *Man Lives On* (*Oktyabr',* No. 10, 1962) both make the point that the Jews and Soviet political officers were usually shot at once, and that they were identified with the help of Nazi collaborators among the prisoners themselves. Nikolai Dubov's *At the Lone Tree* (*Raduga,* No. 2, 1966) is exceptional in offering some comment on the fact. The author, a middle-aged Russian novelist living in the Ukraine, uses the opportunity to indict anti-Semitism in general, although somewhat indirectly, a precaution dictated perhaps by the overall aversion of the Soviet authorities to the subject. In Dubov's novel there are several scenes of torture and murder of Jewish prisoners of war. After one of these, the following conversation ensued between a young Soviet soldier and an older comrade:

> "Why do the Germans hate the Jews so?" Grishka asked.
> "It is not just the Germans," Matveyev replied. "All Fascists do. Anytime, anywhere. No matter what a man pretends to be, if he is an anti-Semite, it means he is a Fascist. Open or secret, but a Fascist nevertheless . . ."

Dubov's brief comment was rather exceptional. As pointed out, by and large, Soviet writers at best contented themselves with purely factual and very brief reportage of Nazi atrocities with regard to the Jews. Boris Polevoi is case in point. Now an editor of the liberal *Yunost'* magazine, he was once a staunch Stalinist and acquired notoriety for having brazenly lied to the American leftist writer Howard Fast about the fate of the executed Soviet Yiddish intellectuals. In Polevoi's *Doctor Vera* (*Znamya,* No. 4-6, 1966) readers are told how, in an occupied Soviet town, the Nazis blamed the Soviet citizenry's misfortunes on "world Jewry," how they implanted the myth of an international Jewish conspiracy, preached the doctrine of racial inferiority of the Jews, and made the Star of David "a seal of death."

Attempts to help save the Jews in Nazi-held territories were depicted in several prose works. Curiously, none of the authors was Russian. Four wrote in Ukrainian, two in Moldavian (Rumanian written in the Cyrillic script in parts of Rumania that were annexed to the U.S.S.R. in 1940) and one each in Belorussian and in Lithuanian, the latter a Jew. Significantly, in each case the effort was ultimately unsuccessful; sometimes this is stated, in other cases merely intimated.

In "The Sow," a short story from a 1959 collection of Moldavian tales by B. Vlestaru (the Russian edition was reviewed in *Dnestr,* No. 2, 1961) a thirteen-year-old boy smuggles food into the ghetto. In T. Myhal's novel *The Inn* (*Zhovten',* No. 10, 1965) Ukrainians try to save their Jewish neighbors in a variety of ways. Yuri Mushketyk, a young novelist and the editor-in-chief of the Ukrainian literary monthly *Dnipro,* is the author of a short story entitled "Our Father Who Art in Heaven" (*Dnipro,* No. 2, 1962) in which he relates how during the war Ukrainian peasants tried to save a Jewish boy by giving him a crucifix and teaching him Christian prayers – a rather unusual story for a Soviet writer. In *Where Are Your Tillers, O Earth?* (*Dnestr,* No. 10, 1962) Anna Lupan, a young Moldavian novelist and a sister of the better known writer and Party bureaucrat Andrei Lupan, depicts an old man and his little grandson watching helplessly a Jewish girl being dragged to the ghetto and, later, her father being caught by the Nazis. Petro Vershyhora, a famous wartime Soviet guerrilla leader, recalls in his *Crossing the River* (*Dnipro,* No. 1, 1961) that the Nazis had relatively little trouble finding assistance in their massacres of the Jews, because collaborators were rewarded with the property of the slaughtered Jews. Jewish property is also the reward of an informer who betrays to the Nazis a Jewish mother and her young son. While the two are taken away, a Nazi soldier also kills a non-Jewish boy crippled with meningitis. The author of the story, ironically entitled "Mercy Killing," was V. Taras. It appeared in a Russian-language literary monthly published in Minsk ("Euthanasia," *Neman,* No. 7, 1967).

Among the more imaginative treatments of the theme of Jewish martyrdom were Alexander Batrov's *Novellas of the Steppe Shore* (*Sovetskaya Ukraina,* No. 6, 1961) and Itskhokas Meras' *What the World Rests On* (*Yunost',* No. 4, 1966). The heroine of Batrov's novella is an old Mexican woman named Sarah who was brought to Russia many years ago by her husband, a Russian sailor. The Nazis, mistaking her for a Jewess, cart her off to the ghetto. Her old Russian husband wants to join her, but the Nazis refuse to let him follow her because the crucifix tatooed on his body testifies to his Aryan ancestry. The old man attacks his German interrogators and is himself killed.

Meras is a Jew writing in Lithuanian. An earlier story of his, *Always Threatened,* ("Vechnyi shakh," *Druzhba narodov,* No. 8, 1965) is set in wartime Poland, and movingly describes a little Polish boy who is jealous of Jewish children's pretty yellow Stars of David and makes one for himself. Unfortunately, the story is later marred by a melodramatic ending: the boy kills with an axe a Nazi soldier who is about to rape a little Jewish girl. *What the World Rests On* bears some similarity to one of the most memorable works in all of literature of the Holocaust, André Schwarz-Bart's French novel *The Last of the Just.* Both echo the Talmudic legend that in every generation the wicked world is saved by the righteousness of thirty-six humble persons. The righteous soul in Meras' novel is a Lithuanian peasant woman who attempts to save during the war five children – two of them Jewish, one Lithuanian, one Russian and one, significantly, German. Eventually, all of the children die. Some Soviet critics (e.g., V. Bushin in *Literaturnaya gazeta,* July 16, 1966) correctly noted the affinity of Meras' heroine to the martyred Russian peasant woman in Alexander Solzhenitsyn's "Matryona's Hut."

During World War II Russia's Jews contributed not only a lion's share of that country's martyrs, but legions of her heroes as well. Proportionately, the Jews ranked first on the list of soldiers decorated for bravery, including those awarded the highest military honor, the title of Hero of the Soviet Union. Soviet literature, however, rarely speaks of their exploits as do, incidentally, Soviet statistics – except those produced for foreign consumption. They are, it seems, something of an embarrassment, as are the Jewish dead slaughtered by the Nazis, perhaps because emphasizing their sweat and blood would add validity to their specifically Jewish claims and hopes. Significantly, the relaxation of literary controls during the post-Stalin "thaws" brought out not only more descriptions of Jewish contributions to the war effort, but even some published literary testimony of suppression of such evidence although, to be sure, in a previous period. Nevertheless, the manner in which these complaints were voiced – not to speak of other evidence – clearly indicates that this policy of silence is still very much in effect, although it is on occasion less strictly enforced.

Three authors described Jewish civilians in wartime U.S.S.R. In F. Grachev's memoirs of besieged Leningrad (*Zvezda,* No. 2, 1960) there is a portrait of Yona Rafailovich Kugel, an old newspaper editor, who refuses to leave the starving and freezing city even when his own son dies of hunger and disease, and carries on until he himself dies of exhaustion. Edward Shim's short story "Prosperous Gusev" (*Znamya,* No. 7, 1966) told the story of a "good" Jewish economic offender, Grigori Aronovich, who fed starving workers at an armaments factory by illegally manufac-

turing and selling pots and spoons which were made of otherwise useless scrap metal. A good human interest story was Nikolai Voronov's "The Saviors" (*Novy mir,* No. 3, 1965). Set in a major center of steel industry somewhere in Siberia, it described a widow of a Jewish doctor who went there from her native Bobruisk in Western Russia together with her little son. The widow had thought of living together with her brother, an engineer at the metal works, but his wife was opposed to taking her in, and the widow and her boy live alone. The Jewish widow succeeds in finding a "degrading" job. She becomes a bathhouse attendant, and spends her days watching naked workmen wash and delouse their uniforms. She meets an ordinary middle-aged Russian worker who is as lonely as she is and they live as man and wife, even though the boy openly dislikes the intruder. Later the workman returns to his native village to become a collective farm chairman. He sends the widow a food package. The boy refuses to eat it, and is beaten up by his tearful mother.

Active Jews in Nazi-held areas – as distinct from those who were only passive objects of Nazi bestiality – were shown by three writers. Oleg Moiseyev's "Uncle Yasha from Buchenwald" (*Yunost',* No. 1, 1961) was a true account of Yakov Semyonovich Goftman, now a clown in a Soviet circus. While in a Nazi camp, (he was taken prisoner after being wounded in action, and his captors were not aware of his Jewishness) Goftman entertained, as best he could, Soviet youngsters incarcerated there. Wladzimir Karpan's Belorussian novel, *The Bloody Shores of Nyamiga* (*Polymya,* No. 1 and 2, 1962), depicted Jewish martyrdom and resistance in a Nazi-occupied town. The novel's authentic ring was doubtless enhanced by the fact that its author was himself a participant in resistance movements in the occupied territories. V. Sobko's Ukrainian novel *At Ten O'Clock Sharp* (*Dnipro,* No. 4, 1967) shows a Jewish girl returning to Nazi-occupied Kiev. In a state of shock, she cannot comprehend reality, but is helped by the Communist underground. Afterwards she gets better and participates in the guerrilla struggle. Ultimately she is caught and killed by the Nazis.

As pointed out earlier, there is a shocking paucity of works depicting Jews in the armed forces. The few exceptions encountered included Alexander Krivitsky's documentary account *The Red Letter Day* (*Znamya,* No. 9, 1962) which tells of the formation of a famous Soviet military unit, the Panfilov Division; the three organizers include a veteran of the Civil War, Major Shekhtman. A very similar man, Meyer Weisman, was mentioned in another memoir, A. Saparov's *Four Notebooks* (*Zvezda,* No. 5, 1962). In Iosif Gerasimov's novel *Nightingales* (*Neva,* No. 10, 1963) private Izya Levin, a violinist, weeps when his fingers are

covered with blisters from digging trenches; but the same Levin dies when he jumps to protect with his body a comrade manning a machine gun. Numerous Jewish soldiers whose hatred of the Nazis drives them to reckless heroism are seen fleetingly in Ehrenburg's memoirs, which also contain scenes of Nazi massacres of the Jews. Ehrenburg also recalls that the leaflets disseminated by Russian troops fighting in Nazi uniforms called him a "kike dog" (*Novy mir*, No. 1 through 3, 1963).

The strongest affirmation of Jewish ethnic identity, of pride in Jewish past and readiness to die for a Jewish future, was found in *A Glove Made of Straw*, a novel by Alexander Il'chenko, a Ukrainian author now in his early sixties, known for his preoccupation with Ukrainian history. Il'chenko's novel appeared in August 1966 in the Ukrainian literary monthly *Vitchyzna*. The novel is set during World War II. One of its protagonists is named Aron Burstein. His speech contains a number of references to Jewish customs and idiomatic expressions cited in the original Yiddish. Burstein, a Soviet guerrilla, is wounded and captured by the Nazis. Delirious, he now relives his past, his periods of happiness in the Soviet oil fields of Baku and also his moments of anger:

> He recalled feeling outraged by those who did not like his, Aron's [Jewish] name. But he had despised even more those who wished to change their Jewish names or, even more disgracefully, their patronymics. He, Aron, was proud of his father, a man who smelted tar for a living. He had never concealed that his father was [a Jew named] Nathan, he never tried to pass him off as [a Gentile named] Volodymyr or Mykola. And he himself had always been Aron and Aron he would die. He had once asked his old man—what does his Jewish soul yearn for? "To defeat Fascism. And also, I want," the father continued, "to see my people tilling the earth, mining coal and producing steel—together with all mankind. Equal to all! It's all really very simple," and the wise man grew silent.
>
> Aron, always full of respect for his father, for his ancient name, for the beauty of the sweat of his brow, for his human hopes and aspirations and, yes, for the realization of these hopes—for these he was now dying, bespattered with blood, although, *shtetl* skeptic that he was, he did not yet believe in his own death.

At least four writers, two Jews and two non-Jews, mentioned the hitherto taboo subject of wartime *Soviet* anti-Semitism. In Ivan Shamyakin's Belorussian novella *The Bridge* (*Polymya*, No. 7, 1965) Abram Rabinovich (a "classical" Jewish name in anti-Semitic jokes) is described as a draft dodger. A not too dissimilar charge is levied against a Jewish soldier in the Army: another Soviet soldier declares that Jews like to risk *other* people's lives. The Jewish soldier, defended by his buddies, agrees that his accuser "is not a Fascist, but simply an idiot" (Ye. Yarmagayev, *The Time of Our Maturity*, *Zvezda*, No. 3, 1962). In *Wild Honey*,

a major novel by the Ukrainian writer Leonid Pervomaisky (pseudonym of Ilya Shlomovich Gurevich), a Soviet Jewish soldier killed in action is posthumously denied credit for heroism (*Oktyabr'*, No. 2, 1963). Finally, in Ehrenburg's memoirs we are told of people who, during the war, spread the rumor that the Jews "prefer Tashkent to the front lines," i.e., avoid service in the Army. That this insidious anti-Semitism was not entirely alien to the Soviet *government* at that time we learn from the following incident:

> In the summer, the [wartime] Soviet Information Bureau asked me to write an appeal to American Jews about the Nazi atrocities and about the necessity of defeating the Third Reich as speedily as possible. One of A. S. Shcherbakov's [Soviet Propaganda chief—M.F.] assistants, Kondakov, turned down my text. He said that there is no reason to mention the exploits of Jewish soldiers in the Red Army: "this is bragging." I wrote to Shcherbakov . . . The conversation was long and strained. Shcherbakov said that Kondakov was "a bit too zealous," but that a few passages in my article will have to be deleted. (*Novy mir*, No. 1, 1963)

We know from Ehrenburg himself how painful it was for him—and probably other Soviet Jewish writers—to observe the silence that was imposed on Jewish suffering during the Holocaust. Prudently, Ehrenburg prefers to comment on an article written in 1944 by the Polish poet Julian Tuwim, a man resembling Ehrenburg in many respects, a highly assimilated Jew, a leftist and a cosmopolitan who, though a Polish writer, was never fully accepted as a Pole. Tuwim's article was entitled "We, Polish Jews" and contained the following lines:

> I am a Jew because of the blood that flows *from* veins . . . The blood of the Jews (not "Jewish blood") flows in deep, wide streams. The darkened streams merge into bloody, feverish brotherhood of martyrdom with the Jews . . . We, the Shloimes, Sruls, Moshkos, we, the filthy ones, the ones reeking of garlic, we, with our countless [insulting] nicknames, proved ourselves worthy of Achilles, Richard the Lion Hearted and other heroes . . .

Ehrenburg continued:

> These words, written in blood, "the blood that flows from the veins," were copied by thousands. I read them in 1944 and for a long time could not speak to anyone. Tuwim's words were the oath and the curse that lived in the hearts of many. Tuwim knew how to express them.[9]

[9] It should be noted, perhaps, that expressing one's own sentiments through the device of using another man's pronouncements and then expressing one's agreement with it is a popular Soviet stratagem of bypassing possible objection from the censorship. It also "co-opts" another writer into sharing responsibility for a "risky" opinion.

A number of Soviet works touched on the fate of the Jews in other countries of Europe. Four of these were set in Hitler's Germany. Yirzhi Marek, one of the two non-Jewish writers to tackle the subject, gave a horrifying account of murder and plunder of a small Jewish town, with old Jews singing the Psalms on their way to slaughter. His narrator, a surviving Nazi, cannot understand why he should be blamed for it. Not only was he simply following orders, but he carried out his duties without much enthusiasm, doing only as much as was necessary to avoid the jeers of his comrades. Marek's Ukrainian novel appeared in *Vsesvit,* No. 8, 1965. Of the other novelists, Natan Rybak writes in Ukrainian, M. Slutskis in Lithuanian and the recently deceased Lev Nikulin in Russian. In Rybak's melodramatic novel (*The Time of Expectations and of Fulfillments, Nauka i zhizn',* No. 1, 1961) a German scientist during the Nazi era refuses to submit to the humiliation of proving that his mother was not Jewish and burns his notes which contain the secret of nuclear energy. A 1961 collection of short stories by M. Slutskis (reviewed in *Druzhba narodov,* No. 3, 1962) contained a tale about a German professor whose Jewish wife was taken away to the ghetto. The German has faith in his countrymen and is certain that she would soon be released. To his horror he learns that all of his former friends and associates have since become Nazis. In Nikulin's novel *The Coward* (*Moskva,* No. 9 and 10, 1960) the narrator's wife, a daughter of a Munich Jewish doctor, is arrested, and his visit to the police results only in crushed fingers on his hand. The wife disappears in a concentration camp. Nikulin, though genuflecting to Communist teachings by showing that rich Jews had a somewhat easier time even under the Nazis, also emphasizes that being Jewish was reason enough for deportation. In V. Zakrutkin's anti-Semitic novel referred to earlier in this study (*The Creation of the World, Oktyabr'* No. 7, 1967) the Nazis torture a German woman and her husband trying to find out where their gold is hidden. The gold, it appears, had vanished together with the Aryan woman's Jewish husband. Intentionally or not, the impression created is that the Jew took the gold with him and left his wife and father-in-law behind to face the Nazis.

Mitsos Alexandropoulos, a Greek emigre who lives in the U.S.S.R., depicted Nazi occupation of his homeland showing, among others, how Greek Jews were betrayed to the Germans by people who wanted to steal Jewish property (*Nights and Dawns, Oktyabr',* No. 5 and 6, 1961).

Two Soviet writers described Nazi-occupied Poland. In Z. Safyan's *Engineer Geyna's Diary* (*Moskva,* No. 7, 1966) the narrator, a Pole, is physically sickened by the sight of mass slaughters

of the Jews and tells his mistress that he cannot go on with their love affair.

Peretz Markish was a foremost Soviet Yiddish poet. He was among the Yiddish intellectuals executed in 1952, and was posthumously cleared of unspecified charges against him only after Stalin's death. His novel about the Warsaw ghetto, *The Steps of Generations,* was published in the original Yiddish, and a brief excerpt from it appeared in Russian translation in the now defunct weekly, *Literaturnaya Rossiya,* No. 34, 1963. Curiously, in his brief introduction, the since deceased Russian novelist Vsevolod Ivanov took pains to emphasize that Markish was an "internationalist" (exactly the same thesis was defended at length in Ehrenburg's memoirs), presumably because concern with Jewish subject matter on the part of a Yiddish writer must be defended from this charge, although no such misgivings are automatic in any other case, and also because Jewish nationalism is clearly regarded as the most insidious of all nationalist aberrations. Most probably, the reason Vsevolod Ivanov, a veteran Soviet writer, carefully specified that Markish's novel deals with "Polish, Russian and Jewish" martyrdom and heroism (regardless of whether this indeed is the case) was that, as a veteran whose own work bore many marks of Soviet censorship, Ivanov knew full well that Jewish martyrdom and heroism during the period of World War II – and it alone – unless presented in conjunction with other martyrdoms and heroisms, clearly constitutes a "nationalist" provocation.

The excerpt from Peretz Markish's novel was entitled "The Golden-Haired Marcella." It depicted, very powerfully, the inferno of the ghetto of Warsaw, emphasizing, among others, its grim incongruities, such as the Roman Catholic Church all of whose parishioners and even priests were of Jewish origin and wore armbands with the Star of David. The story's heroine, Marcella, an Italian Christian girl, is in the ghetto with her Jewish husband. The consul of fascist Italy wants to save her, but she refuses to leave her husband behind. The author makes every attempt to avoid "nationalist" pitfalls and his characters provide illustrations (most often, rather crude and clumsy) of his "proletarian internationalist" convictions. Thus, the Italian fascist is ready – for a consideration – to put aside his racist beliefs and to even befriend a Jew; the inmates of the ghetto include non-Jews; and at one point the Jewish painter solemnly declares that there are good and bad Jews, Italians and Germans, Jewish capitalists and German workers – this, in a Nazi ghetto! Still, as we pointed out, seasoned literary politicians of the stature of Vsevolod Ivanov and Ehrenburg thought it wiser to take additional precautions and to emphasize the obvious, lest Markish be accused of nationalism.

The only cheering note was inspired by one of the very few encouraging incidents in the annals of the Holocaust. Vladimir Lifshits, a children's poet and a Jew, related in his *A Danish Legend* (*Novy mir,* No. 4, 1967) how in Copenhagen, when the Nazis ordered the Jews to wear yellow stars, the King of Denmark put one on, and so did all Danes.

Many were the sites of mass murders of Russia's Jews by the Nazis, and some were even occasionally mentioned in Soviet literature; thus, e.g., A. Klenov's novel *In Search of Love* (*Znamya,* No. 9, 1966) told the tale of the death camp at the Ninth Fort, a few miles from the Lithuanian city of Kaunas (Kovno), where 22,000 Jews were executed on two November days in 1941. There is no disputing the fact, however, that it is the ravine of Babi Yar at the outskirts of Kiev, where some seventy thousand Jews were massacred, that became the symbol of Soviet Jewry's wartime tragedy.

Babi Yar was occasionally mentioned by Soviet novelists even under Stalin, and there have been references to it in Soviet literature ever since. In "People," a short story by the expatriate Polish Communist Wanda Wasilewska, the best-known Polish Soviet writer, an old Jewish doctor in Kiev is deserted by his German wife as soon as the Nazis march in. But the doctor is then cared for by an old Ukrainian housekeeper who even wants to accompany him to Babi Yar, but is turned away by German soldiers. When questioned later about her motives, the peasant woman is surprised by all the fuss. Many non-Jews, she says, went to Babi Yar with their spouses (*Znamya,* No. 7, 1960).

The Black Sun, a Ukrainian novel by Ivan Holovshenko and Oleksa Musiyenko (*Vitchyzna,* No. 5, 1965), states that when Kiev's Jews were ordered to assemble by the Nazis, no Ukrainians thought that they were to be slaughtered, simply because no one thought that tens of thousands of people could all be murdered. Nevertheless, the anti-Nazi underground had warned the Jews against complying with the orders. The novel also offers glimpses of the mass execution itself. And several months before the appearance of Yevtushenko's poem Ehrenburg wrote in *Novy mir* (No. 1, 1961):

> I saw the sands of Babi Yar . . . I had no relatives or friends among the victims, but it seems to me that I never experienced such pain and anguish and loneliness as I did at Babi Yar . . . Somehow I thought that it was here that my relatives, friends and playmates of forty years ago had died . . . The children and grandchildren of Tevye [Sholom Aleichem's heroes] bid farewell to Yegupets [Kiev, in the works of Sholom Aleichem] in Babi Yar.

Yevgeni Yevtushenko's "Babi Yar" appeared in *Literaturnaya*

gazeta on September 19, 1961. Since there can be no doubt that the appearance of the poem and the events that followed constitute the single most important literary event reflecting not only Soviet attitudes toward the Jewish past, but also toward the Jewish present, it is worth quoting here in full. The literal translation is my own:

There are no monuments at Babi Yar.
A steep precipice as a crude gravestone.
I am frightened.
Today, I am as old
As the Jewish people itself.
It seems to me that I am now a Hebrew.
Here I am, wandering through ancient Egypt.
And here I die crucified on the cross
And to this day I bear the scars of nails.
It seems to me that I am Dreyfus.
Vulgarians and philistines are my informer and my judge.
I am behind bars.
I am surrounded.
Hounded, bespattered, slandered.
Squealing cheap ladies dressed up in lace
Stick their umbrellas in my face.
Blood flows, spilling over the floors.
Barroom loudmouths are raising hell
Reeking of vodka and onion.
Helpless, I am kicked aside by a boot.
I plead with pogrom toughs to no avail.
A marketplace trader beats up my mother,
While the mob roars with laughter:
"Beat the Yids, save Russia!"

My Russian people!
I know that deep inside you are universalist.
But often those whose hands are soiled with crime
Have brazenly invoked your purest name.
I know the goodness of my land.
How vile and horrid, that without batting an eyelash,
The anti-Semites assumed the grandiloquent appellation
Of a "Union of the Russian People"!
It seems to me that I am Anna Frank,
Transparent as an April twig
And that I am in love.
And I need no pretty words.
What I need, is that we gaze at each other.
How little we can see or smell!
Leaves and sky are denied to us. Yet so much is left.
Tenderly, we can embrace each other in a dark room.

They are coming here?
Don't be afraid. This is the roar of spring itself.
Spring is coming here.
And you come to me,
And give me your lips, quick.
They are breaking into the door?
No, this is winter's ice cracking . . .
Wild grasses rustle at Babi Yar.
The trees look menacing, like judges.
Here everything is screaming in silence,
And, my cap off, I feel my hair slowly turning gray.
And I myself am but a soundless howl
Over the thousands of thousands buried here.
I am every old man shot here dead.
I am every child shot here dead.
Nothing in me shall ever forget about it!
Let the "Internationale" blare forth
When the last anti-Semite on earth
Is buried for all time.
There is no Jewish blood in my blood.
But with a deep-seated hatred
I am hated by anti-Semites as if I were a Jew.
And this makes me a true Russian!

An excellent summary of the storm unleashed by Yevtushenko's poem may be found in an article by William Korey.[10] We shall merely mention here two examples of the fury it evoked among those to whom the mere mention of wartime Jewish tragedy was a "crime" against the Soviet homeland. Within five days after the appearance of Yevtushenko's "Babi Yar" in the relatively liberal *Literaturnaya gazeta,* the staunchly Stalinist *Literatura i zhizn'* of September 24, 1961, printed a poem entitled "My Answer." Not only did its author, Aleksei Markov, vilify Yevtushenko for having, in effect, written a poem about the Jews instead of writing one about the Russians, but, as if confirming the last two lines of Yevtushenko's poem, he described his adversary as a "pygmy" who spat at the memory of the Russian war dead, and also called him a "cosmopolitan" – an ominous term of abuse that was used in Stalin's days as a euphemism for "dirty Yid." Three days later, on September 27, 1961, the same newspaper continued the campaign with an article by the Stalinist critic Dmitri Starikov. The article was quite explicit in pointing to that which orthodox Communists found objectionable and reprehensible in Yevtushenko's poem:

Standing at the steep cliff of Babi Yar, a young Soviet writer found

[10]William Korey, "The Forgotten Martyrs of Babi Yar," *The Unredeemed: Anti-Semitism in the Soviet Union,* edited with an introduction by Ronald I. Rubin (Chicago: Quadrangle Books, 1968), pp. 127-134.

there only the inspiration for verses about anti-Semitism! And, while presently meditating about the men and women who died there—"and old man shot dead," "a child shot dead"—he thought only about the fact that they were Jews. It is this that seemed to him most vital, most important, most timely!

Now, Starikov continued, if Yevtushenko *really* wanted to write about Jewish tragedy, he should have written about those Soviet Jews who had left the U.S.S.R. for Israel. And Starikov concluded with the observation that the six-pointed Star of David *cannot* be a symbol of struggle against anti-Semitism.

As so often happens in the U.S.S.R. when a particular literary work is subjected to scathing attack, within a few years there appeared a work in which the same subject was purportedly treated from ideologically correct positions. Anatoli Kuznetsov's novel *Babi Yar (Yunost'*, No. 8 through 10, 1966) was intended to perform this function. Briefly, Kuznetsov's novel, while containing some striking eye-witness descriptions of the massacre (the author, then a young boy, lived in Nazi-occupied Kiev and retained some exceptionally vivid memories of the event) rigorously abstained from any historical excursions and lessons for the present. It viewed the massacre of Babi Yar as a Nazi atrocity, perhaps even a link in a chain of Nazi atrocities against mankind in general, but allowed for no connection between that event and anti-Semitism in the past, let alone in the present. To underscore this, Kuznetsov emphasized that at Babi Yar the Jews were only the *first* victims, that their corpses were then buried under the corpses of the non-Jews who were subsequently executed there—Russians and Ukrainians, civilians and prisoners of war.

In the summer of 1969 Anatoli Kuznetsov defected while on a visit to the West and he now lives in Great Britain. On October 24, 1969, the London *Jewish Chronicle* printed an interview with the author of *Babi Yar*. This is what Kuznetsov said of his novel:

> . . . the version [of the novel] . . . was not the true version of my original manuscript. What appeared was a distorted and totally crippled version, whole pages and passages have been removed by the Soviet censorship, to make my account of Babi Yar as innocuous as possible.
>
> There are two most essential and fundamental differences between my original text and the one which was published. First, whereas the censored and distorted published version presented the crime of Babi Yar as the sole responsibility of the Germans, my original text made it clear that others, too, especially agents of the NKVD [Soviet secret police] and some Ukrainians, also bear a share in the guilt for the massacres in the ravine in Kiev. Secondly, all references to the contemporary anti-Semitism which manifested itself in the official attitude to the massacres of Babi Yar and in the fate of their only two Jewish survivors were cut out. Not

> only is there no monument to the Jewish victims of Babi Yar – the ravine has been filled and is now covered by a motorway – but the only two Jews who survived are still hiding their Jewishness under Russian names and are still afraid to admit that they were at Babi Yar, because of the prevailing atmosphere.

Kuznetsov is presently at work on restoring *Babi Yar's* original text:

> My true testimony as to what happened at Babi Yar will also be an accusation against the rulers of the Soviet Union, who have been as determined to obliterate all traces of the massacre as the Germans were.

While there is no easy way to check the accuracy of Kuznetsov's claims as to *what* was excised by the Soviet censorship (that such excisions were indeed made should be quite obvious to any careful reader of the version that appeared in the U.S.S.R.) there is more than ample evidence, both literary and extra-literary, to support his assertion that over the years a concerted effort has been made to obliterate all memories of Babi Yar, of Jewish martyrdom and heroism during World War II, and, indeed, of the entire history of the Jewish people.

IV. THE POSTWAR YEARS

ALTHOUGH THE BULK of Soviet literature written since Stalin's death is set in contemporary conditions, for reasons discussed earlier the Jews are portrayed most often against the background of World War II or even tsarist Russia. When viewed through the prism of Socialist Realism, under "normal" circumstances Soviet Jews should be hardly noticeable, except insofar as their origins may be guessed from such "secondary" ethnic traits as names or occasional utterances. The postwar return to normalcy was signaled by the reappearance of a few traditional "positive heroes" of Jewish ancestry, curiously, all of them middle-aged or elderly—the younger Jews, presumably, were thought to be completely assimilated to the point where they could no longer be recognized, or, to be precise, *should* no longer be identifiable.

In Boris Kostyukovsky's novel *Terrestial Brothers* (*Zvezda,* No. 5, 1967) readers are introduced to a neurosurgeon named Dr. Rappaport who, though severely wounded during World War I, i.e., nearly fifty years before, remains active and cheerful at the age of seventy. A. Kulikova's short story "And Should The Need Arise" (*Molodoi kommunist,* No. 7, 1963) describes an elderly low-ranking Party bureaucrat, judging by his name, a Jew, who is very devoted to his work and well-liked by laborers at the factory. Yakov Moiseyevich Zamport is an administrator of a

geological expedition in Central Asia. A middle-aged man, he is jovial and efficient. At one point he recalls that his father, a carpenter, never learned to make coffins, because in his Belorussian *shtetl* "the Jews were buried without coffins, in shrouds" (G. Kalinovsky, "A Forgotten Tale," *Nash sovremennik,* No. 4, 1962). Two Stalinist-type Jewish "positive heroes," one a middle-aged engineer named Izrail' Isaakovich Kushnir, and the other, Yuli Abramovich Shtern, a naval surgeon and a devout Communist believer, appeared, respectively, in M. Khazin's "Encounter" (*Dnestr,* No. 1, 1961) and in Alexander Kron's "A House and a Ship" (*Zvezda,* No. 8, 1964). There are good reasons to suspect that the orthodox portrayal of the two characters may be to some degree explained by both authors' desire to expiate some sins they had both committed in the past against Soviet literature. Soon after the war, Khazin was under violent attack for having published a parody of Pushkin's *Eugene Onegin,* in which the nineteenth-century aristocratic dandy revisits his native city, only to find it shabbier, dirtier and infinitely more depressing than the St. Petersburg he knew. Khazin was then charged with a multitude of crimes, ranging from disrespect for the great Russian poet to slander of Soviet citizenry. Kron's transgressions were more recent. A well-known Soviet playwright, he was one of the most courageous figures in the abortive struggle for a liberalization of Soviet cultural life in 1956, and his article denouncing Soviet censorship remains to this day one of the most important documents of the post-Stalin "thaw." Thus, Khazin's 1961 short story and Kron's 1964 "orthodox" novella should be viewed at least partly as attempts to atone for their earlier ideological errors.[11]

The only two active non-assimilated "positive" Jews to appear in post-Stalin writing in present-day settings are both, curiously, of non-Soviet origin. One is an elderly dignified Polish refugee, a former Lodz weaver; a traditional Jew, he refuses to work on the Sabbath. There is, significantly, only one other observant Jew depicted in Soviet fiction dealing with contemporary subject matter (M. Ancharov, "This Blue April," *Moskva,* No. 5, 1967); the other case will be dealt with later in this chapter. In Yemilian Bukov's "Don't Judge a House By Its Fence" (*Dnestr,* No. 10, 1961) we meet a team of masons in Bessarabia. The men are of different

[11] On December 16, 1962, *Izvestiya* published an article to mark the 75th birthday of the late Sofiya Yakovlevna Dal'nyaya (Derman), a proletarian poetess from the Donbas coal mining region, and herself a real-life "positive heroine." Her first book of verse had an introduction by Nadezhda Krupskaya, Lenin's wife. Subsequently, however, Dal'nyaya-Derman was arrested. Obviously, she was considered dangerous, since she was interrogated personally by Lavrentii Beria, the head of the Soviet secret police. After twenty years in jails and concentration camps, she was finally released. According to *Izvestiya,* on October 29, 1960, only three days before her death, Dal'nyaya-Derman wrote to Khrushchev thanking him for letting her die with her name cleared.

ethnic backgrounds, but when one of them, a Jew, makes some funny crack in Yiddish, everybody laughs; everyone seems to understand some Yiddish which, considering the story's locale, is not improbable. Still, it is worth noting that Bukov, who writes in Moldavian, is a prewar member of the Rumanian Communist Party, and that Soviet writers with *foreign* Communist background tend, as a rule, to portray ethnic minorities more sympathetically than do Communist writers born and raised in the U.S.S.R.

The unhealed scars and wounds on the bodies and souls of Jewish survivors of the Holocaust received relatively little attention, and among the six descriptions of such people, four were written by Jewish authors and three of these were translations from the Yiddish. A Russian translation of Ikhil Shraibman's short story "Masters of the City" appeared in the Kishinev monthly *Dnestr* (No. 7, 1962). The story describes an elderly childless couple, Lev Isaakovich and Esfir' (Esther) Yakovlevna. Two of their own children died, and during the war he was in the army. They both work; he is a bookkeeper and she is a nurse in a maternity ward. With no family of her own, her one vicarious pleasure is collecting snapshots of children she saw born in the hospital. Another translation from the Yiddish, Shira Gorshman's "They are from Divnogorsk," appeared in *Druzhba narodov* (No. 12, 1965). Nota (diminitive of Noah—M.F.) and his Russian wife Marina live in distant Siberia, where Nota works on a construction site of a future power station (there are, incidentally, reasons to believe that the choice of locale and occupation was influenced by Yevtushenko's poem *Bratsk Power Station* which had appeared a few months earlier; Yevtushenko's poem will be discussed below). The couple lives quite happily, although the wife complains that she cannot muster enough strength for their infant twins. Nota is somewhat irritated by the wife's inefficiency: "And how do those women manage whose husbands are almost never sober?" he thinks—an obvious allusion to the common belief among Russian women that the Jews shun alcohol, don't beat their wives and therefore make desirable husbands. In the end Nota, who often remembers that his entire family was murdered by the Nazis, finds a way out. He "adopts" a Russian friend's old sister as a "grandmother." This, he says, will provide the old woman with a home and ease his wife's burden. Gorshman's other story, "Papa and Mama," printed in the same issue of the journal, also describes an elderly childless Jewish couple:

> What is she thinking about? She is thinking about their boys. Had their boys returned alive from the war, he [the husband] would have retired long ago, and she would have probably retired also.

> And they would call each other not "papa" and "mama", but Shmuel and Miriam, as they once did.

The third and most poignant translation from the Yiddish was Tevye Gen's novella "In One's Native Town" (*Druzhba narodov*, No. 12, 1962). A Jew returns to his native *shtetl* after the war to discover that there are only four other Jewish survivors.

> You walk through the streets and it seems to you that at any moment you will hear your mother, or your father, brother or sister calling you . . . All you have to do is close your eyes, and you see them all, as if nothing had happened. Is it that easy to forget that of a family of twelve there is nobody left but you, all by yourself? And where your house once stood, there is nothing but dirt, stones and some broken glass. You take a look at it and you feel like screaming, and running away from your own memories.

Gen's novella has an "optimistic" ending: its hero marries the *shtetl's* only surviving Jewish girl.

M. Yufit's Russian story, "Husband and Wife" (*Znamya*, No. 9, 1966), bears much similarity to Shraibman's "Masters of the City." It describes an elderly Jewish nurse who works days and nights in a hospital, often even forgetting to eat and completely oblivious of her own health. The nurse is obviously trying to submerge in work some deep-seated memories of a personal tragedy. She does, however, retain a "private" life: she cares for her two nephews, clearly war orphans.

In M. Prilezhnaya's novel *The Pushkin Waltz* (*Yunost'* No. 3, 1961) we meet an old Jewish watchmaker—a favorite Jewish "stereotype" occupation in Soviet writing, which includes the watchmaker who converses with Lenin himself in Pogodin's play *The Chimes of the Kremlin* (in fact, the kinship of the two is acknowledged). Prilezhnaya's old man is very picturesque; in the words of one of the novel's characters he is "straight from Rembrandt." The watchmaker, whose deceased wife was Russian, has nightmarish visions of his daughter's being burned alive by the Nazis. At the end of the novel the old man dies happily in the knowledge that his daughter died a hero's rather than a martyr's death.

Slightly over three years after the appearance of his "Babi Yar" and the stormy controversy it provoked, Yevgenii Yevtushenko returned to a "Jewish" subject in his long poem *The Bratsk Power Station* (*Yunost'*, No. 4, 1965). This time, Yevtushenko described a relatively young survivor of Nazi massacres who is outwardly rehabilitated, engaged in productive work, but try as he may, cannot forget the horrors of his past. He is haunted by visions of Nazi executions and, although two decades have gone by, he cannot erase from his memory the girl he loved who was murdered in a ghetto, and at the age of forty remains unmarried. Izya Kramer, an electrical engineer, is an efficient dis-

patcher of light to other people, but his own existence is enveloped in darkness and gloom:

> Izya knows that lots of light is needed
> So that you and I should never see again
> The barbed wire surrounding the ghetto
> Or the Stars [of David] frozen to the sleeve.
> So that someone's happy horrid laughter
> Should never jeer at the Jews again
> So that the word "yid" should disappear forever
> And not disgrace the word "human."
> Izya does amount to something.
> The [stormy river] Angara is at his feet.
> Still, somewhere, Izya is crying and crying
> While his [girl] Riva keeps running away . . .

This time, there were few violent objections to Yevtushenko's poem, although some critics did express regret that no attempt was made to incorporate into it a "useful" political message.[12]

Mention was made earlier of the fact that Ehrenburg, a writer wise in the ways of Soviet politics, had felt it necessary to emphasize the late Peretz Markish's "internationalism" in connection with the publication of the Yiddish poet's novel about the Warsaw ghetto (*Novy mir*, No. 9, 1961). Another illustration of the uneasiness and squeamishness surrounding the problem of Soviet Jews in general was found in two articles about the late Leib Kvitko, another Yiddish poet executed in 1952 and then, like Markish, posthumously and without any publicity, cleared of the unspecified charges against him. The two articles appeared in a specialized pedagogical journal and dealt with Kvitko's verses for pre-school children (*Doshkol'noye vospitaniye*, No. 2, 1961). The seven-page article by M. Petrovsky, judging by his name, a non-Jew, carefully avoided any mention of the fact that Kvitko was a Yiddish poet and that the numerous quotations of his verse are all translations from the Yiddish. Conversely, the article by Vl. Glotser (most likely a Jew) emphasized this fact.

In an earlier chapter we discussed the anti-Semitic overtones in some of the literary portrayals of Trotsky. The post-Stalin period provided a new harvest of villains but, with the sole exception of the hated secret police chief Beria who was shot soon after Stalin's death, none of them ever appeared in literary works except for the lone Jew among them, Lazar Kaganovich. To the best of this writer's knowledge, there have been no similar literary portrayals and denunciations of Malenkov, Molotov, Voroshilov,

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[12] Thus, one reviewer pointed out approvingly that Yevtushenko made it clear a former victim of Nazism may now be a respected Soviet engineer, but expressed his disappointment with Yevtushenko's failure to emphasize that forces of racism and imperialism still hold sway in some parts of the world and that one must not slacken one's vigilance (A. Makarov, "Meditating Over Ye. Yevtushenko's Poem," *Znamya*, No. 10, 1965).

and later of Bulganin and most recently of Khrushchev.

In Arkadi Vasilyev's "Adopted Unanimously" (*Moskva,* No. 12, 1962) an editor is thrown into jail by the Soviet secret police on charges of having maliciously printed a swastika over the "dear portrait of a member of the Politbureau, Comrade Kaganovich." Vladimir Belyayev's "A Voice That Will Always Live" (*Moskva,* No. 8, 1962) purported to deal with actual events. According to Belyayev, it was Kaganovich who slandered such eminent Ukrainian writers as Maxim Ryl's'kyj and Yurii Yanovs'kyj whom he accused of Ukrainian nationalism. In 1948 Kaganovich prevented the publication of a collection of articles by the Ukrainian Communist journalist Yaroslav Halan, charging that Halan was a Ukrainian nationalist. As a result, Halan's pistol was taken away from him since he was no longer politically trustworthy. A year later, according to Belyayev, Halan was killed in Lvov by real Ukrainian nationalists working hand in glove with Catholic priests. It is not our intention to dispute these charges against Kaganovich, which may well all be true. We only wish to point to the fact that none of Kaganovich's colleagues was similarly pilloried in literary periodicals, and that an article such as Belyayev's was strikingly similar to a novel referred to in an earlier chapter, in which a Soviet Jewish policeman was accused of a biological hatred of the Ukrainians which he had inherited from his forefather and which he would, in turn, transmit to his descendants.

A fashionable theme in Soviet literature of the late 1950's and early 1960's was that of unjust imprisonment followed by a happy ending. Most of such works dealt with persons arrested in the 1930's or immediately after the war. There were two Jewish protagonists in works in the latter category. In V. Kiselev's "A Man Is Able To" (*Moskva,* No. 6, 1960) a lawyer named Katz is a victim of a frame-up but stoically endures imprisonment. A fanatic believer in judicial process, he insists on proper procedure. In Ivan Klima's Ukrainian novel *An Hour of Silence* (*Vsesvit,* No. 10 and 11, 1964) David Fuchs, an engineer and a former inmate of Nazi camps, is denounced as an agent of Western intelligence. An unusual feature of Klima's novel which sets it apart from most Soviet fiction dealing with the subject is that at first the accused engineer's closest friends and even his wife believe that he is guilty as charged, and change their views only after his release from prison.

The "economic trials" of the mid-1960's with their strong anti-Semitic overtones (e.g., the emphasis on the criminals' Jewish-sounding names, and the fact that the majority of persons actually executed on these charges were Jews) were reflected in two *literary* works (the amount of semi-literary reportage and particularly the number of "humorous" *feuilletons* was staggering).

The first was a comedy entitled *Wolves in the City* (*Oktyabr'*, No. 1, 1965) by the veteran playwright Lev Sheinin. The play features a shady dealer and a smooth operator from Odessa (a "Jewish" city) who uses a number of "ethnic" names—Solomon Bukover (Jewish), Bukashvili (Georgian), Bukashyan (Armenian), and who also claims to be half-German and half-Gypsy. The fact that the author of the play was himself a Jew (he had written in the 1920's and 1930's a number of dramas dealing with Jewish subject matter) may have had something to do with the absence of openly anti-Semitic overtones in it.

There was, however, raw and vicious anti-Semitism in V. Tevekelyan's novel *Beyond the Moscow River* which was the most important literary production inspired by the campaign against such economic offenses as embezzlement and black marketeering. The novel appeared in *Moskva*, No. 9, 1966. What makes the novel particularly insidious is that it was the first Soviet literary work in decades in which the central character was an observant Orthodox Jew.

The novel's chief protagonist, Solomon Moiseyevich Kazarnovsky, an elderly man, is described as living at present in retirement somewhere near Moscow in a little house he and his wife own. The Soviet novelist Tevekelyan portrays him as a "harmless, pious Jew who observes all of the rituals prescribed by the faith, never eats forbidden foods [the Hebrew term *trefa* is used in the original—M.F.], attends synagogue, and even manages to help out the poor out of his meager pension." In short, outwardly the old man is an exemplary traditional observant Jew. But as the novel unfolds, we learn that this quiet man, well up in his seventies, is a major black marketeer. Although extremely rich, Solomon Moiseyevich lives modestly, both out of prudence and out of habit. He is driven to make more and more money by some inner demonic force, or perhaps by the same impetus that prompts sportsmen to always dream of new victories. A gullible young Russian, a former inmate of a concentration camp with a taste for high living, is gradually drawn into the nets of this Russian Fagin. Tevekelyan then proceeds to portray the shady deals in which Solomon Moiseyevich involves his weak-willed Russian Oliver Twist. These range from ordinary theft to gold and foreign currency speculation. When necessary, the kindly old Solomon Moiseyevich does not hesitate to order his associates to murder any member of the ring suspected of betraying the gang. Toward the end of the novel the Scripture-quoting old Jew is also shown as the leader of a ring of thieves specializing in stealing icons from old Russian churches and, while selling these to foreigners, also supplying them with information for Western espionage organizations.

In creating the image of Solomon Moiseyevich Kazarnovsky, Tevekelyan and the editors of the literary monthly *Moskva* have created a new anti-Semitic stereotype. Like the old prerevolutionary stereotype, he is a desecrator of Christian churches, a motif that was also found in Anatolii Dimarov's *Through the Roads of Life,* the 1963 Soviet Ukrainian novel discussed earlier in this study. At the same time, by linking recent Soviet literature's sole Orthodox Jewish "anti-hero" with espionage, they provided a sinister "artistic" illustration of one of the ominous theses of Soviet anti-religious propaganda. The postulate repeated in several "atheist" works beginning with Trofim Kichko's 1963 tract *Judaism Without Embellishment* is that "Judaism kills love for the Socialist motherland." And with the disappearance of such love there is, understandably, no major obstacle on the road to treason.

As was suggested earlier, the basic cause for the extreme reticence on the part of Soviet writers who may have considered dealing with Jewish subject matter during the period between 1954 and 1967 was the well-grounded fear that the Soviet authorities may construe any such preoccupation – even if set in a distant past – as indirect criticism of the present-day deplorable state of Soviet Russia's Jewry and of the policies of the authorities who must shoulder most of the responsibility for this condition. It comes as no surprise, therefore, that under the circumstances overt and covert Soviet anti-Semitism became one of the favorite subjects of "underground" Soviet literature which made its appearance in Russia soon after Stalin's death and which continues to grow and to circulate to this day. A detailed examination of this literature is outside the scope of this study which deals exclusively with Soviet writing published through official channels and freely available to all Soviet readers.[13] As is often the case in the U.S.S.R., rank-and-file citizens learned something of the contents of this forbidden literature only from the denunciations of it that appeared in the official press. Thus, soon after the arrest of Andrei Sinyavsky and Yulii Daniel (but prior to their official trial), the Stalin Prize winning writer Dmitrii Yeremin wrote a blistering article in *Izvestiya* (January 13, 1966) charging both writers and particularly Sinyavsky, the non-Jew among them, with – of all things – anti-Semitism:

> One cannot but notice the following detail: Andrei Sinyavsky, a Russian by birth, was hiding under the [Jewish-sounding] pseudonym of Abram Tertz. For what purpose? Clearly, only for the purpose of provocation! By publishing abroad anti-Soviet novellas and

[13] The subject is discussed in some detail in my monograph "Jewish Themes in Soviet Russian Literature," *The Jews in Soviet Russia,* Lionel Kochan, ed., New York, Oxford University Press, 1970, pp. 188-207.

> short stories under the [Jewish-sounding] name of Abram Tertz, Sinyavsky tried to create the impression that there is anti-Semitism in our country, and that a writer with a name like Abram Tertz, if he wishes to write "frankly" about life in the Soviet Union, must look for publishers in the West.

Yeremin then treated his readers to a tasty morsel from the writings of Sinyavsky-Tertz:

> For example, there was one Solomon Moiseyevich whose "wife, a promiscuous Russian wench, stole all of his belongings, then disgraced him with a sixteen-year-old barber, and finally left him. But what could a Solomon Moiseyevich understand about the Russian national character?"[14]

* * * * *

A characteristic feature of several of the post-Stalin "thaws" was the occasional successful attempt to discuss in plays, verse and prose subjects that had been until then completely banned from literature. The newly-found latitude and tolerance were, to be sure, fragile. To most writers and readers, however, the important thing was that the "unsubjects" could be mentioned at all, even if only fleetingly and indirectly. The subjects were many and varied. They included the Great Purges, the bloodshed of the collectivization, the vast empire of concentration camps, the initial Soviet defeats during World War II, the abysmal poverty in the Soviet countryside and – very, very occasionally – the existence of anti-Semitism in the U.S.S.R.

The one good excuse for a discussion of the subject that a Soviet writer might have had was the one and only official acknowledgement of a postwar anti-Semitic "incident." The strongly anti-Semitic "anti-cosmopolitan" purges were never officially denounced as such; but the "Kremlin doctor's case" was.

Briefly, it shall be recalled that on January 13, 1953, barely two months before Stalin's death, a group of Soviet physicians, most of them Jews, were arrested on charges of plotting medical murder of a number of Soviet leaders. The physicians were said to have been recruited by an American Jewish relief organization (the "Joint") which, in turn, carried out the orders of the U.S. intelligence services. What followed can be described only as an orgy of anti-Jewish hysteria which would have, most likely, culminated in a bloodbath had it not been suddenly averted by Stalin's death on March 8. On April 6, *Pravda* announced that the doctors were all innocent, that the entire case was a fabrication,

[14] It may or may not have been coincidental that the same name and patronymic, Solomon Moiseyevich, was soon to be used by V. Tevekelyan's anti-Semitic novel referred to earlier in this chapter. For a complete transcript of the 1966 trial of Sinyavsky and Daniel at which they were sentenced, respectively, to seven and five years of imprisonment, see *On Trial: the Soviet State Versus "Abram Tertz" and "Nikolai Arzhak,"* translated, edited and with an introduction by Max Hayward, New York, Harper & Row, 1966.

and that those responsible for it had also "attempted to fan flames of ethnic hatred, which is profoundly alien to Socialist ideology." Thus, the anti-Semitic character of the "doctors' plot" was officially admitted and disavowed.

The first to refer to the "doctors' plot" in literature was Ehrenburg. In his novel *The Thaw* (1954), the title of which was to become synonymous with the post-Stalin period of great expectations, a Jewish woman doctor recalls how after the arrest of the Moscow physicians her own patients and colleagues began to suspect her of trying to poison them. A brief reference to the "doctors' plot" and to the disgrace it brought the U.S.S.R. in the West was made in Yevtushenko's first important work, the long poem *Station Winter* (*Oktyabr'*, No. 10, 1956). Yurii Bondarev's *The Two of Them,* a sequel to his well known novel *Silence* (*Novy mir,* No. 4 and 5, 1964), describes the ominous atmosphere immediately after the doctors' arrest. There are rumors that some children were poisoned, and that three doctors were already arrested. Other people say that the arrested doctors had tried to "infect people with cancer." A passerby whispers—"They've arrested a yid. An old man, a hunchback. He was on the payroll of the Americans." Eleven years after the publication of *The Thaw* Ehrenburg returned to the theme of the "doctors' plot" once more. In the installment of his memoirs printed in 1965 (*Novy mir,* No. 4, 1965) he recalls meeting at the time a physician who told him that he has been swallowing different medicines all day in order to reassure his patients that he had no intention of poisoning them, and that a drunk at the marketplace was seen screaming that the Jews want to poison Stalin.[15]

Anna Val'tseva's *Apartment No. 13* (the title was obviously meant to evoke associations with Vladimir Korolenko's *House No. 13,* which was written in 1903 in the wake of the notorious Kishinev pogrom) was printed in the first issue of the new literary journal *Moskva* in 1957, and there are indications that the appearance of the inaugural issue was held up because of it. It is not unlikely that the following utterance of one of the story's protagonists was found objectionable by the censors: "Not every scoundrel is an anti-Semite, but every anti-Semite is a scoundrel." This remark in Val'tseva's tale was provoked by the refusal of one of the characters to address a Jewish acquaintance by his correct Russian patronymic "Arkadyevich," and his nasty insistence on calling him "Abramovich." Memories of Korolenko's well-known reportage were also found in Boris Vlestaru's *The Steps* (*Dnestr,* No. 6, 1961) which is set in Kishinev soon after the war. An old Jewish cabbie recalls having driven Korolenko to

[15] Ehrenburg claims that at the time he was asked to denounce the "criminal physicians" but refused to do so.

the site of the pogrom a half a century earlier and recalls proudly that Korolenko's account mentions a Jewish cabbie. The old man concludes that now, after the defeat of Hitler, Korolenko's article is more timely than ever.

In Vladimir Voynovich's short story "I Want to Be Honest" (*Novy mir,* No. 2, 1963) the narrator, a non-Jew, recalls that his first love, a girl named Roza (a common "Jewish" name in Russia), was murdered at Babi Yar; it is perhaps for that reason, he muses, that he never married. Recently, he recalls, he had courted a woman, but when she saw Roza's photograph in his room she told him in a fit of jealously: "you can go to that . . . of yours." The unsaid part could be easily guessed as something like "Jewish bitch." (Soviet writing is still, by our standards, quite Victorian.)

An interesting novella to deal with the subject of postwar Soviet anti-Semitism was I. Grekova's *Undergoing Trials* (*Novy mir,* No. 7, 1967). The story is dedicated "to the memory of F.V.," which may indicate that it is based on a real-life incident. The two central characters in Grekova's tale are both Soviet army generals in active service and the story is set sometime after Stalin's death, although most of the events recalled by the two elderly generals deal with the period between 1948 and 1953. One of the generals is named Gindin. Before the Revolution, Gindin recalls, he was refused admission to a gymnasium because of the "Jewish quota." After World War II, he says, he fell into disfavor and was exiled in effect to the formerly Japanese part of Sakhalin Island. Now Gindin is back in the army, but is badly treated by his superiors and subordinates alike who, he intimates, consider him an easy target in spite of his high military rank. The other general, with whom Gindin soon becomes friendly, also has the misfortune of bearing a non-Russian name. General Sievers recalls how, not too long ago, the decision was made to check his ancestry to make sure he is not a foreigner – or Jew. Sievers found it amusing that the investigating Communist Soviet officer was relieved to learn that he was, in fact, a Russian aristocrat of German descent, as attested by an eighteenth century document signed by a Russian Empress. General Sievers then tells his Jewish colleague that he, too, was once denied access to education because of his ancestry: in the 1920's he was expelled from a Soviet school when his noble antecedents came to light. Grekova's tale makes an ironic point. At various times in Soviet history, ethnic and class origins were (and, to some extent, still are) used to discriminate against loyal Soviet subjects. The fact that this discrimination affected both a proletarian Jew and a blue-blood aristocrat of German ancestry serves to make the irony even more incongruous.

The most detailed account of postwar Soviet anti-Semitism

was found in the concluding chapters of Ehrenburg's memoirs. In the installments printed in 1963 (*Novy mir,* No. 1 through 3) Ehrenburg recalls a wartime meeting of the Jewish Anti-Fascist Committee which was attended by the theatrical director Mikhoels, the cinema director Sergei Eisenstein, the poet Markish, the novelist Bergelson and the physicist Kapitsa: "Eight years later many of the speakers and signers of the appeal were arrested solely because of their membership in the Jewish Anti-Fascist Committee."

In later installments (*Novy mir,* No. 1 and 2, 1965) Ehrenburg related the murder of Mikhoels and the execution of his partner from the Moscow State Yiddish Theater, the actor Zuskin, and then described the "anti-cosmopolitan" purges in the U.S.S.R. He also gave an account of his visits in America with Albert Einstein, and the famous scientist's explanation why he had collected funds for the Hebrew University of Jerusalem: "I saw how they humiliated the Jews in Germany, and my heart bled. I saw how schools, humorous journals and various other types of propaganda were mobilized to suppress all self-esteem in my Jewish brothers." Ehrenburg reminded his readers that even forty years ago, in his novel *The Stormy Life of Lasik Roitschwantz,* he refused to recognize Zionism as a solution to the "Jewish problem," depicting the then Palestine as a capitalist country like any other. He then explained that he objects to the republication of this novel "not because I consider it too immature a work, or because I wish to disown it, but because, after the Nazi atrocities, I consider the republication of many of its satirical pages premature." He also disclosed that soon after World War II he and the late novelist Vasilii Grossman had written a Black Book describing Nazi atrocities toward the Soviet Jews. The book was scheduled to appear in 1948—in fact, it had already been set in type—but was not permitted to appear. The obvious implication of Ehrenburg's statement was that the book is still under a ban.

Only two years before his death, Ehrenburg, then the most famous Jew in the U.S.S.R., tried to explain to his readers why he, a man with no religious or cultural ties to the Jewish people, persists in considering himself a Jew:

> I am linked to the Jews by the trenches in which the Nazis buried old women and infants. In the past, I am linked to them by rivers of blood; more recently, by the evil weeds that sprang up from racist seeds, by the tenacity of prejudice and bias. When on my seventieth birthday I spoke over the radio, I told my listeners that as long as a single anti-Semite remains in this world, I shall always repeat that I am a Jew. It was not nationalism that prompted me to say this, but my notion of human dignity. I continue to believe that anti-Semitism is an evil survival of the past and that it will ultimately

disappear together with all racial prejudice. Now, however, I realize that the uprooting of century-old prejudices from the consciousness of men will require much time.

CONCLUSIONS

AS WAS DEMONSTRATED in preceding chapters, in the years since Stalin's death there appears to be a conscious attempt on the part of the Soviet literary, publishing and censorship authorities to discourage any type of interest in Jewish subject matter on the part of Soviet writers and thus to prevent any discussion of it among Soviet readers. The fact that in spite of the large number of Soviet authors of Jewish ancestry most literary portraits of Jews were created by non-Jewish authors supports this hypothesis; the latter are more likely to escape serious criticism for disregarding such "informal" but stern advice. One can well imagine that the short poem "Babi Yar" would never have been published were Yevtushenko Jewish.

Another fact that emerges is the relatively intense preoccupation with Jewish subjects and the frequency with which Jewish personages appear in the non-Russian literatures of the U.S.S.R. This is even true of the Russian language literary periodicals published in the Ukraine, in Belorussia and in Moldavia. To a great extent, this phenomenon reflects the nationalistic sentiments of these peoples, which are conducive to a greater degree

of attention to problems facing other ethnic groups, such as the Jews. As a result, among the hundreds of Soviet literary works examined in this study, of the three most extreme cases, two were published in the Ukraine and the author of the third was Armenian. The most viciously anti-Semitic Soviet novel was printed in the Ukraine—but so was the most pro-Jewish work to appear in the U.S.S.R.

Jewish personages are most often portrayed against the background of prerevolutionary Russia and of the Second World War. Ordinarily, only isolated Jews are portrayed, and there are few works in which the relations between Jews and non-Jews are contrasted with those among the Jews themselves. The few exceptions are, for the most part, translations from the Yiddish. Very significantly, with the sole exception of Ehrenburg's memoirs, none of the works examined contained a single reference to any Soviet Jewish protagonist's ties to or interest in the State of Israel. This fact alone is evidence enough of the need for extreme caution in examining Soviet literature as a social document.

Finally, it is worth emphasizing that, considering the generally anti-Semitic tenor of Soviet journalism in the last two decades, there have been relatively few anti-Semitic literary works published. There is every reason to believe that such works would have been welcomed by the Soviet authorities. Yet only a very few Soviet authors were attracted to such lucrative subjects as the campaign against economic offenses and the anti-religious drive. On the other hand, a good many tried to include in their works some positive, though of necessity brief references to the Jews as well as occasional jibes at anti-Semitism. We thus see that in this respect, as in so many others, many Soviet writers seek to continue the humanitarian traditions of prerevolutionary Russian literature, the tradition of concern for the underdog and the struggle against injustice. There is every reason to believe that under conditions of greater freedom of expression Soviet literature could, without any prompting, become a powerful weapon in the struggle against discrimination and intolerance.

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